



FINAL REPORT

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SCHEME FOR THE SUPPLY OF FRUITS,
VEGETABLES, MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS IN
EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

14.10.2022

ESTAT FOOD



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 MAIN RESULTS

- The School Fruit Scheme and the School Milk Scheme include almost all children and students in the target group. In the 2020/21 school year, the schemes covered nearly 93% of the total planned number of representatives of the target groups. A share, which does not change significantly during the 4-year period under consideration.
- In the 2020/21 school year, nearly 7,200 tons of products under the School Fruit and School Milk Scheme were distributed to the target group, which is 8 percentage points more than in the 2017/18 school year.
- Only within the school year 2020/21, the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments distributed over 40 million portions among nearly 430 thousand children and students up to the age of 11.
- The portions of products, distributed at child or student level, have increased over the years, reaching up to 94 portions per year received under the Scheme for the supply of fruit, vegetables and milk products in educational establishments.
- Funds aimed at accompanying educational measures were allocated from the budget only in the school year 2020/21. Within that school year, approximately BGN 2,179,332 were planned for accompanying educational measures, and only 1/3 of the planned amount has been spent.
- The accompanying educational measures are insufficient and not all opportunities that the scheme offers in this regard have been used. The lack of a budget and the feeling that such measures should be covered by the educational establishment itself is found among most representatives of the educational institutions.
- For the period 2017-2021, a little over BGN 82 million was spent within the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments.
- The applicants, part of the focus groups, share that they are relatively satisfied with the application system under the scheme. However, remarks are made regarding the impossibility of applying online, the methodology for reimbursement of eligible expenses, etc., and emphasis is placed on the need for more frequent price adjustments.
- The school scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments is perceived as useful by almost all parents (90.3%).
- The frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at school remains unchanged in 2022. Six years after the first survey, seven out of ten children up to the fourth grade consume fruit and vegetables at least once a day. A share that is only 0.4 percentage points lower than the 70.7% measured in 2016.
- The consumption of milk and milk products in educational establishments is understandably more limited compared to fruits and vegetables. Just over half of the



parents are of the opinion that their children are given milk and yogurt at least once a day.

- Every third student up to the 4th grade (29%) brings fruits, vegetables, milk and/or milk products from home and consumes them at school.
- Almost 2/3, or in absolute values this is approximately 264,000 children from the 1st group in the kindergarten to the 4th grade in schools, consume fruits and vegetables at least once a day, both at home and in the educational institution.
- The share of children who consume milk (40%) and milk products (37%) every day at home and at school is relatively smaller. In absolute values, these are respectively about 172,000 and 159,000 representatives of the target group.
- A little over 1/5 of the children say that sometimes they want to eat fruits or vegetables at home, but there are none available. A share that was seven percentage points lower in 2016 (or 17%).
- About half of the parents think that their children are consuming more or less the same amount of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products at school compared to last year.
- Only 4% of the children state that they receive fruits and vegetables less than twice a week, and another 13% are categorical that they do not receive the necessary ration per week.
- Only 11% of the children covered by the Scheme consume the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables. Seven out of ten children, representatives of the target group, consume fruits and vegetables below the recommended daily intake.
- Just over half of the parents say that fruits and vegetables make up 30% of their child's total daily diet.
- Less than 13% of the children in kindergartens and 11% of the students up to the 4th grade receive the recommended daily intake of milk and yogurt.
- Seven out of ten children, representatives of the target group, consume milk and yogurt below the recommended daily intake. A little under 1/5 of all parents indicate amounts of milk consumed by their children that are around the recommended daily intake, and after additional calculations it turns out that another 7% consume more than the recommended ration.
- Over 70% of the children consume the amount of yellow cheese and cheese recommended by health experts. A high share of representatives of the target group who fulfill the recommendations for daily consumption of milk products is registered only with regard to these products.
- Almost 100 percent is the recognition of 11 out of a total of 15 shown fruits and vegetables. The youngest representatives of the target group (3-4-year-olds) name an average of 13 products, from 5 to 8-year-olds - 14 fruits and vegetables, and children over 9 years old have no difficulty naming all the products that were shown to them.
- The children, part of the Scheme, have practiced 3 different activities oriented towards healthy eating and agriculture on the average. Most often, they are related to gaining knowledge about how to protect nature (72%), how to eat healthy (72%), and they are a part of practical activities in the form of games, riddles and quizzes (52%).



- The analysis of the information from the Monitoring Reports and the results and the effect of the intervention show that a high level of efficiency has been achieved in the implementation of the school schemes.

1.2 BASIC RULES OR TRENDS

- A strong coverage of the school schemes with more than 90% of the children included, part of the target group, is reported. The tendency is for this percentage not to decrease and to vary between 90 and 100%.
- The accompanying educational measures are not implemented effectively, despite the existence of a delegated budget under this item.
- There is also a tendency to allocate minimal funds for information, monitoring and evaluation, even though funds are provided.
- As the degree of awareness with the schemes decreases, the respondents' certainty regarding their usefulness also decreases. Such a finding is a clear and definite sign that enhanced information measures would lead also to higher approval among parents.
- Parents' attitudes towards the healthy nutrition of their children are the same throughout the country and there are no specific regions where access to healthy products is limited.
- The elder children, the less likely they will consume fruits and vegetables at school.
- The consumption of milk and milk products in educational establishments is more limited compared to fruits and vegetables.
- Consumption of milk and yogurt is more typical for children who attend kindergartens than schools or CSES, while children in schools prefer more fruits.
- The more financially comfortable parents feel, the more likely their child will eat healthy, home-cooked meals at school. Parents over the age of 35 and university graduates also fall into the group of those who send their child to school with healthy food.
- Children whose parents are less educated and from minorities consume fruits and vegetables at home less often than the rest of their peers. The financial factor plays a much smaller role in the frequency of this consumption - the data do not report a correlation between the self-evaluation of the household's financial situation and the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at home.
- In the Northwest planning region, children consume fruits and vegetables at home less often than their peers in other parts of Bulgaria. On the other hand, in the Southwest region (which includes Sofia), parents more often indicate that their child consumes fruits and vegetables more than once a day.
- In towns, children consume fruits and vegetables more often than their peers in villages. Children of preschool age consume more fruits and vegetables than children of school age, not only at school, but also at home.
- More kindergarten children eat healthily, compared to 1st to 4th grade students, probably because of the special diet that preschool children are subjected to in the educational establishment.
- Girls, part of the scheme, more often than boys eat less and do not cover the recommended daily intake of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products.



- Children from minority groups consume the least amount of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products per day.
- Compared to 2016, the consumption of carbonated drinks by children has not decreased - six out of ten representatives of the target group consume such products. However, a decrease in the frequency of intake of these drinks is reported. Fewer and fewer children covered by the Scheme are willing to consume more unhealthy foods.
- The types of vegetables distributed under the School Fruit scheme are less popular with children than fruits. There is a change in a positive direction compared to 2016, and six years later, a greater number of children and students report that they like the taste of cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots and peppers.

1.3 SUMMARY

As regards increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products

The quantitative survey in 2022 did not register any particular change in the frequency of consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products by children and students within educational establishments. Six years after the first study, a stability in consumption is established, which is a sign of the sustainability of the results. However, there has been an increase in people consuming these healthy products when they are at home, which may be due to two factors: a change in the family environment itself (such as attitudes, financial situation, etc.) and/or a change in the attitudes of the child himself and his desire to consume fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products outside the scope of the scheme.

As regards building healthy habits among children

The children have not stopped consuming harmful foods and drinks, but they have significantly reduced their intake. The consumption of carbonated drinks, crisps, sugar confectionery and others is more limited in the educational establishments than outside, but nevertheless it exists, which can compromise the implementation of school schemes.

Children and students not only recognize different fruits and vegetables, but also like eating them. There is a change in the attitudes towards healthy foods, they will be increasingly preferred and sought after because of their pleasant taste and nutritional value.

As regards educational measures

The educational measures that are implemented in the educational establishments are insufficient and are often part of the educational program of schools and kindergartens, without the scheme having an impact on their implementation. Given the availability of a budget and the absence of restrictions due to COVID-19, it is advisable to strengthen the activities in this area. Local applicants/suppliers under the schemes, who are in direct contact with local producers, who are aware of the objectives and the tasks of the school schemes and often initiate accompanying educational measures themselves, could also be brought in for support.

In the event it is proceeded to a more targeted implementation of educational measures and their scale is deployed (for example, organizing visits to farms, gardens and others recommended

in the Strategy), it is extremely important to communicate the program/gratuitous nature of such measures.

As regards information and publicity activities

It is precisely because of the low levels of awareness that there is a misunderstanding on the part of the parents of the children about the objectives of the schemes, which in turn leads to wrong expectations and disapproval when these expectations are not met. For some parents, the school schemes are not ancillary programs, but should function as the main source of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products for their children. Such a misunderstanding also strongly affects the image of the scheme, because in this way it is wrongly considered that it fails to fulfill its obligations. It is extremely important to communicate the following topics with the parents: the objectives of the school schemes, the recommendations of the experts on healthy eating for children of a certain age group, the scope of the schemes (what is offered), the standards by which products are selected and others. A variety of information dissemination channels can be used. First of all, the already existing sources should be used - for example, through the channels of the Ministry of Education and Culture in social networks, with which it communicates directly with parents; by presenting the scheme during parent meetings; by creating groups on social networks and a site to be maintained regularly and others.



2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report is in fulfillment of a public procurement with subject "**Evaluation of the implementation of the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments**", with Contract reg. No. 09-2600/12 of 22.02.2022, concluded between the State Fund Agriculture and ESTAT EOOD. The evaluation of the implementation of the Scheme is regulated by the National Strategy for implementation of a scheme for the supply of fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products in kindergartens, schools, special educational support centers in the Republic of Bulgaria until the end of the 2022/2023 school year. The legal basis for carrying out the evaluation is contained in Article 9, paragraph 2 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/40, Article 8, paragraph 2, Annex "Minimum requirements for the form and content of evaluation reports" of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/39.

The need for implementation of a public procurement with subject "Evaluation of the implementation of the Scheme for the supply of fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments" is dictated by the need **to evaluate its effectiveness regarding the fulfillment of its main objectives, namely increasing the consumption of the mentioned products by children and teaching them to healthy eating**. It is also explicitly stated in Article 21 of the Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for provision of fruits and vegetables and milk and milk products in educational establishments - School Fruit Scheme and School Milk Scheme (the Ordinance). The results of the evaluation are provided to the European Commission in the form of an evaluation report that covers the school years from 2017/2018 to 2021/2022.

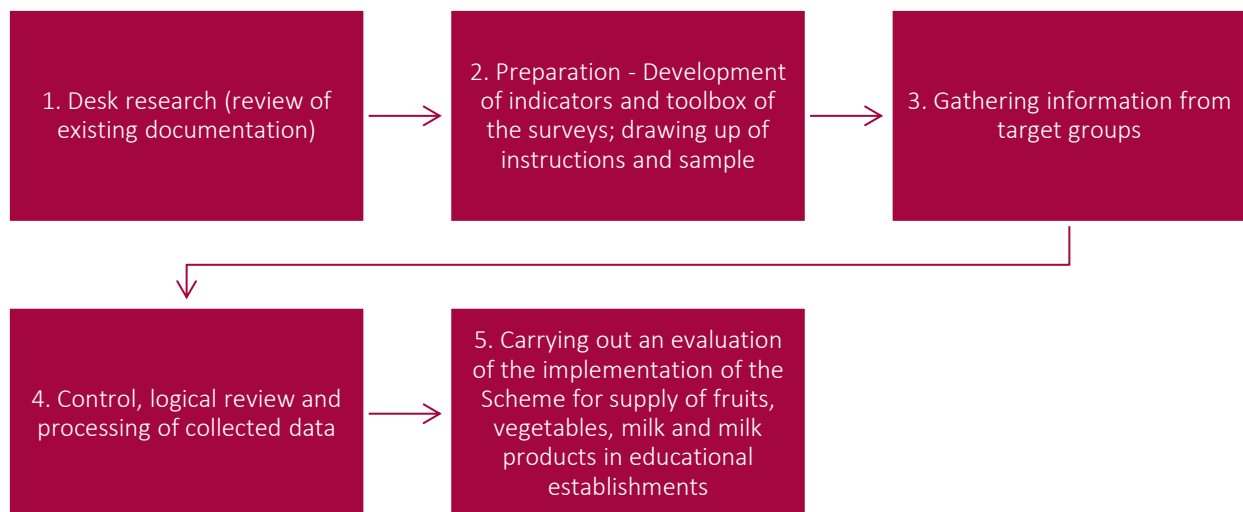


2.2 SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation of the implementation of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments covers 4 main stages.

- 1 First of all, a review of the existing documents and analyses on the subject - the National Strategy for implementation of the Scheme until the end of the 2022/2023 school year (the Strategy), the Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for implementation of the schemes, Guidelines of the European Commission for evaluation, results and analysis of the evaluation within the previous program period and others, is made.
- 2 The following has been developed on the basis of the information from the documents and the analyses related to the implementation of the Schemes:
 - **Indicators**, with base and target values, aimed at tracking the achieved results;
 - **Toolbox** for conducting the quantitative survey among the target group, which will quantify the indicators and answer the main evaluation questions;
 - **Toolbox** for conducting a qualitative survey among applicants and other bodies involved in the organization of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments.
 - **Development and implementation of a data collection approach** (instructions, sampling, etc.).
- 3 Collecting the information from the target groups through the developed tools.
- 4 Data control, processing and analysis are the last and final stages of the evaluation. The analytical report contains the answers to the questions and the values of the indicators and an evaluation based on the evaluation criteria formulated in the previous item

Figure 1. Stages for carrying out the evaluation





3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION PLAN, DATA SOURCES AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This part of the report briefly presents the main steps for carrying out the evaluation and, more specifically, an approach in the application of applicable data collection methods. In addition, the **criteria for selection of respondents** in the quantitative and qualitative surveys, as well as the **guidelines for conducting the interviews** (as appendices to this report), are presented.

1 Desk research

The evaluation starts with the application of the so-called Desk research. Desk research is a method that includes activities of identification, collection, research and analysis of secondary information and data on the researched topic, regulations, strategic and other documents. The method deals with already generated and publicly available information, which in the majority of cases has been collected and analyzed for a different purpose. The following regulations, documents and sources of information are covered within the desk research.

- The national strategy for implementation of a scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in kindergartens, schools and special educational support centers in the Republic of Bulgaria until the end of the 2022/2023 school year;
- The Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for implementation of schemes for provision of fruit and vegetables and milk and milk products in educational establishments - School Fruit scheme and School Milk scheme;
- Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/39 of the European Commission of November 3, 2016;
- Guidelines for evaluating the implementation of the EU Scheme for provision of fruit, vegetables and milk in schools;
- The evaluation of the European School Fruit Scheme from October 2012;
- The inspection reports on the implementation of the Schemes for the school years from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020;
- The annual monitoring reports on the physical and financial implementation of the Scheme for the school years from 2017-2018 to 2020-2021;
- The quantitative survey among children within the framework of the previous evaluation of the Scheme, conducted by Sova-Harris in 2017;
- The national nutrition survey, carried out by the National Center for Public Health and Analysis in 2013.

2 Preparation

The fieldwork preparation process started with the development of a quantitative questionnaire. In parallel with its preparation, the work on the preparation of the sample began.

The **questionnaire** is based on the information studied within the desk research. The basis of its development is the Scheme Evaluation Report from the previous program period. Such an approach allows to achieve comparability of results, and not to collect information for its own



sake, which would not allow the measurement of any progress. Moreover, in the Guidelines of the European Commission, there is a recommendation for conducting an initial, measuring survey before the final assessment. Given the lack of such a survey, the evaluation team used the measured values of the main indicators from the 2016 survey.

The limitation of this approach is that only the School Fruit Scheme was evaluated in 2016, due to the different format of the Scheme.

Also, the questionnaires reflect the recommendations set out in the EC Guidelines, in the existing regulations on the subject and are also based on the experience of the team in carrying out evaluations of different interventions. Given the specificity of the target group (children up to 10 years of age), the questionnaire is adapted for self-filling by parents. In addition, there is also a separate block for children to fill in (with the help of a parent if needed). It covers questions for which it is not necessary to provide accurate and precise information (for example, how many milliliters of milk per day is consumed by the child). The purpose of this block is rather to determine the general attitude of children towards healthy eating, recognition of individual fruits and vegetables, attitude towards them, satisfaction and others. The developed questionnaire for the quantitative survey is presented in Appendix #1 of this report.

The specific indicators are developed after formulating the questions. They are based on the recommendations set out in the EC Guidelines, the objectives and tasks of the public procurement, as well as the available information from the Evaluation Report of 2016. Baseline values and targets for achievement in 2022 have not been set for some of the indicators, as such information is missing. The specific indicators are presented in 6.1. [Theme 1 Implementation](#) of this report.

The questionnaires for the qualitative survey (the so-called **moderator schemes**) are developed after receiving and processing the first part of the questionnaires from the quantitative survey. The moderator scheme for the focus groups is presented in Appendix #2 of this report.

The next step in the preparatory stage is to draw up a **sample** for the quantitative study. According to the Terms of Reference of the Contracting Authority, a representative quantitative survey should be conducted in 360 educational establishments participating in the School Fruit scheme and the School Milk scheme in all 28 provinces of the country, and at least 4 educational establishments will be covered - 2 educational establishments located in towns and 2 located in villages - in each province. The sample structure is an accurate projection of the general population – all educational establishments included in the Scheme. The sampling is presented in [3.4 Sampling](#) of this report.

3 Gathering information from target groups. Selection of respondents

! The fieldwork was carried out in the period April-July 2022.

Quantitative survey

The ESTAT team and its assistants contacted all sampled educational establishments (and their backups, where necessary). After establishing contact with the educational establishment, the principals were asked to select (at their discretion) certain classes/groups so as to reach a minimum number of parent-child pairs. The method of data registration is an **"online self-**



administered survey", which was carried out by sending a link to the children's parents. In this case, the link, along with the instructions, is sent by the class teacher/supervisor(or whoever has access to the group). The full results of the survey are presented in Appendix #4 to this report.

⚠ Data collection is carried out in strict compliance with the requirements of the ESOMAR Code for interviewing children and young people. In the part where the opinion of school-aged children is taken, the following provisions of the Code will be observed:

"In any other environment (except in a protected environment, e.g. school, childcare center, social service point), for example at home, on the street or in any public place, the permission of a parent, guardian or another person to whom the parent has entrusted responsibility for the child, must be obtained. It is not allowed to interview a child who is not accompanied by an adult at the time of the interview."

Qualitative survey

In addition, a qualitative survey using the group discussion method was also conducted. ESTAT experts conducted **6 group discussions** (one for each planning area) among applicants and other bodies involved in the organization of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments.

As stated earlier, the development of the moderator scheme started after some of the questionnaires were processed. In order to meet the EC requirement, the focus groups were conducted until 31 July 2022.

The recruitment of the participants was carried out on the basis of a previously prepared list agreed with the Contracting Authority. Between 8 and 12 participants, including two backups, were selected and invited for each focus group. The specific participants are recruited among:

- Commercial companies, applicants under the Scheme;
- Social service providers;
- Principals of schools;
- Representatives of the regional inspectorates of the Ministry of Education and Culture;
- Representatives of the RHI;
- Representatives of the regional directorates of the State Fund Agriculture.

The discussions were held on the Zoom online platform. Focus groups last between 90 and 120 minutes. With the express consent of all participants, the group discussion was recorded (audio-recorded), and the audio recordings were transcribed and presented in the form of transcripts.

The full transcripts of the focus group discussions are presented in Appendix #3 to this report.

4 Control, logical review and processing of collected data

Data control, logical review, and processing are standard procedures for conducting any quantitative survey. Given the volume of the sample, as well as the mostly self-completion of the surveys, the control and logical review of the completed questionnaire was carried out regularly, on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

The control was carried out within the entire period of the field work.



5 Conducting an evaluation

The evaluation of the schemes was conducted on the basis of the requirements described in the Terms of Reference of the Contracting Authority and the Guidelines of the European Commission for evaluation.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

According to the Guidelines to the Member States on the evaluation of the implementation of the Scheme for the provision of fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products in schools, the main evaluation questions are two.

First question: The first question should provide information on the extent to which the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments for the period 2017/2018 - 2021/2022 school year **has increased the overall consumption of conventionally produced fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products among children** in accordance with national recommendations for healthy eating of the target age group?

This question aims to cover the results from the school scheme in terms of children's consumption of fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products. The answer to this question should go beyond simply measuring the consumption of the products in question by children. It should try to establish to what extent the school scheme contributed to the observed changes – was the hypothesized increase in the amount and frequency of the products consumed by the children due to the participation in the school scheme or to other factors? If the objectives of the Strategy have not been met, the answer to this question should include an evaluation of the extent to which the objectives have not been met and the factors for this - why the Scheme has failed. Ultimately, the answer to this question must determine whether unexpected or unintended effects have occurred, such as parents knowingly or unknowingly reducing the fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products they give to children.

Within the first question, the following general indicators are derived:

1. Changes in direct and indirect consumption of fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products, direct consumption being that within the school scheme and indirect consumption being that outside the period of provision of products within the school scheme:

- The change is defined by amount consumed and frequency of consumption
- Share of children meeting the recommended intake of five or more portions of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Share of children meeting the national recommendations for healthy eating in terms of daily intake of milk and milk products.

Second question: To what extent has the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments for the period 2017/2018 - 2021/2022 school year contributed to the acquisition of healthy eating habits among children?



The question aims to cover the results of the school scheme in terms of introducing children to agriculture and teaching them healthy eating habits.

Within the first question, the following general indicators are derived

1. Changes in the knowledge about the type of agricultural products:

- Changes in the number of fruits and vegetables children recognize
- Changes in the share of children familiar with the milk and cheese production cycle

2. Change in the knowledge about the health benefits of consuming fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products:

- Change in the share of children who know how many portions of fruits and vegetables should be consumed daily
- Change in the share of children who know about the food pyramid
- Change in the share of children who are aware of the harm of consuming products with too much salt, fat and sugar

3. Change in the attitudes regarding the consumption of fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products

- Change in the share of children who like eating fruits and vegetables and specifying exactly which fruits and vegetables they prefer
- Change in the share of children who like drinking milk and eating milk products and specifying exactly which dairy products they have preferences for
- Change in the share of children who would like to consume more fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products

3.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

According to the recommendations of the European Commission, within the evaluation of the School Fruit scheme and the School Milk scheme, the criteria for:

- **Implementation** – the extent to which the schemes have achieved the objectives of the National Strategy;
- **Effectiveness** – the extent to which the schemes achieve their objectives and intended outcomes, and more specifically increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products among children;
- **Efficiency** - achieves the best possible ratio between input resources and results achieved - is it possible to achieve better results with the same resources or the same results with fewer resources?
- **Coherence** – this is the degree to which the logic of the intervention is consistent and the intervention does not contradict other interventions with similar goals;
- **Relevance** – The intervention has responded to the needs addressed – the objectives were appropriate to address the needs and problems. The design of the policy or activity is justified

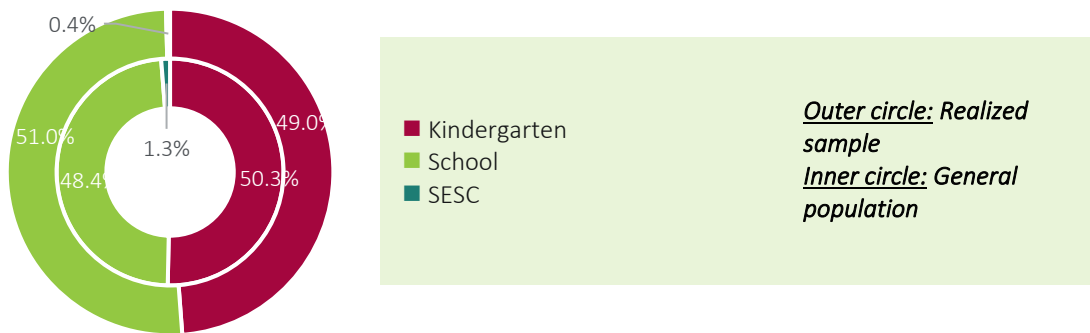


- **Added value** – to what extent the intervention has added additional value to that which would be brought by policies and activities at national and regional level.

3.4 SAMPLING

The educational establishments covered by the survey are an accurate projection of the general population according to the attribute "type of school". As shown in the following graph, the percentage distribution of the educational establishments part of the survey is as close as possible to the shares in the comprehensive sample.

Chart1. General population and realized sample - type of educational establishment



The realized sample reported more completed questionnaires by respondents attending educational establishments in towns than in villages.

Chart2. General population and realized sample - type of settlement



The following table presents the percentage distribution of the general population by provinces, as well as the shares by this indicator within the realized sample.



Table 1. Share of provinces in the general population and in the realized sample

Province	General population	Realized sample	Province	General population	Realized sample
Blagoevgrad	4.9%	6.3%	Pleven	4.2%	3.8%
Burgas	6.5%	6.0%	Plovdiv	8.8%	11.0%
Varna	4.6%	3.3%	Razgrad	2.6%	2.7%
Veliko Tarnovo	3.9%	3.7%	Ruse	2.6%	3.4%
Vidin	0.9%	1.1%	Silistra	1.6%	2.1%
Vratsa	2.7%	4.0%	Sliven	3.5%	3.6%
Gabrovo	1.2%	1.1%	Smolyan	2.5%	2.0%
Dobrich	3.3%	1.7%	Sofia-city	13.4%	11.4%
Kardjali	2.9%	2.3%	Sofia-province	3.7%	4.3%
Kyustendil	1.2%	1.6%	Stara Zagora	4.9%	3.3%
Lovech	2.0%	2.7%	Targovishte	1.7%	2.4%
Montana	2.7%	2.8%	Haskovo	2.6%	2.3%
Pazardzhik	4.1%	4.4%	Shumen	4.4%	1.6%
Pernik	1.5%	3.4%	Yambol	1.4%	1.7%
			<i>Total:</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

According to the requirements of the Contracting Authority, the representative survey should cover not less than 4 educational establishments in each province (2 educational institutions in towns and 2 in villages). The following table presents the number of covered educational establishments (by type) in the 28 administrative provinces of the country.

Table 2. Number of covered kindergartens and schools by type of settlement in each of the provinces of the country

Province	Town	Village	Total	Province	Town	Village	Total
Blagoevgrad	23	21	44	Pleven	19	8	27
Burgas	29	13	42	Plovdiv	56	21	77
Varna	20	3	23	Razgrad	10	9	19
Veliko Tarnovo	19	7	26	Ruse	18	6	24
Vidin	6	2	8	Silistra	7	8	15
Vratsa	17	11	28	Sliven	14	11	25
Gabrovo	6	2	8	Smolyan	11	3	14
Dobrich	10	2	12	Sofia-city	69	11	80
Kardjali	13	3	16	Sofia-province	16	14	30
Kyustendil	9	2	11	Stara Zagora	17	6	23
Lovech	11	8	19	Targovishte	13	4	17
Montana	16	4	20	Haskovo	13	3	16
Pazardzhik	24	7	31	Shumen	6	5	11
Pernik	22	2	24	Yambol	9	3	12
				<i>Total: 702</i>			

A total of **702 educational establishments**, almost twice as much as the originally intended 360, took part. The sizes of the stochastic error at 95% guarantee probability and at 50% relative share, by basic criteria, are presented in the following table.



Table 3. Stochastic error size

	General population	Realized sample
TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT		
Kindergarten	7.0%	4.7%
School	7.1%	4.6%
TYPE OF SETTLEMENT		
Town	6.5%	3.8%
Village	7.7%	6.4%

6 focus groups were organized among representatives of the stakeholders within the implementation of the project. The following table provides brief information on the time of the event and the number of participants.

Table4. Focus group discussions - time of holding and composition

Planning area	Date held	Number of participants
Northwest Region	12.07.2022	11
North central	12.07.2022	8
Northeast	13.07.2022	8
South Central	13.07.2022	9
Southeast	14.07.2022	9
Southwest	28.07.2022	8
Total:		53

❗ The surveys cover a total of 23,211 people:

- ➔ Quantitative survey: 23,158 parent-child pairs covered under the Scheme
- ➔ Qualitative survey: 53 people, representatives of the stakeholders (commercial companies, applicants under the Scheme, principals of schools, suppliers)

3.5 INDICATORS

Specific objective 1: Increasing the consumption of fruits/vegetables/milk by children in schools

- Increasing direct consumption of fruits and vegetables (when at school)
- Increasing indirect consumption of fruits and vegetables (when at home)
- Increasing the direct consumption of milk and milk products (when at school)
- Increasing indirect consumption of milk and milk products (when at home)

Specific objective 2: Increased knowledge of the children in schools about the variety of agricultural products and about the healthy eating habits

- Number of fruits and vegetables children recognize
- Share of children familiar with the milk and cheese production cycle

Specific objective 3: Raising the awareness of children, students and their parents, as well as teachers about the principles of healthy eating



- Increasing the share of children consuming the recommended intake of five or more portions of fruits and vegetables per day
- Share of children following the national recommendations for healthy eating in terms of milk and milk products intake.
- Share of children who are aware of the harm of consuming products with too much salt, fat, and sugar
- Increasing the share of children who like eating fruits and vegetables and specifying exactly which fruits and vegetables they prefer
- Share of children who like drinking milk and eating dairy products and specifying exactly which milk products they have preferences for
- Increasing the share of children who would like to consume more fruits and vegetables, milk, and milk products

3.6 PROBLEMS OR LIMITATIONS AND SOLUTIONS FOUND

The following problems and limitations, which could be considered in subsequent evaluations of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments, were identified in the course of execution of the procurement:

- 1 Only three Special Education Support Centers out of eleven were covered by the quantitative survey. The reason for the lower participation of SESC stems from the specific approach to children's diet that they adopt. It is recommended that children, parents, and professionals from these educational establishments be covered through qualitative data collection methods such as in-depth interviews in future evaluations of the Scheme. The feedback we received from these Centers was that the standardized questionnaire that was distributed among the representatives of kindergartens and schools did not reflect the specifics of the educational establishments such as SESC.
- 2 Certain difficulties, but without having a negative effect on the data collection, were encountered in the distribution and receipt of completed questionnaires from parents and children in small settlements and from the Roma ethnic group. Often, the representatives of this target subgroup do not have access to the Internet, and their level of education does not allow them to fill out a questionnaire on their own. In these cases, we encountered strong support and help from the directors of the educational institutions, who promptly managed to organize pairs of parents and children to fill out the questionnaire on the territory of the educational establishment.
- 3 According to the Terms of Reference, 6 focus group discussions were to be organized in each planning area, involving applicants, suppliers, directors, and the representatives of the government institutions responsible for the organization and implementation of the schemes. Mixing these two groups of stakeholders proved impossible, not only from a research point of view, but also from an organizational point of view. It is recommended that these two groups be separated in subsequent evaluations. The formation of focus groups among applicants, suppliers and school principals at planning area level is a working approach that was received extremely positively, the participants showed great interest in the event and the participation in the



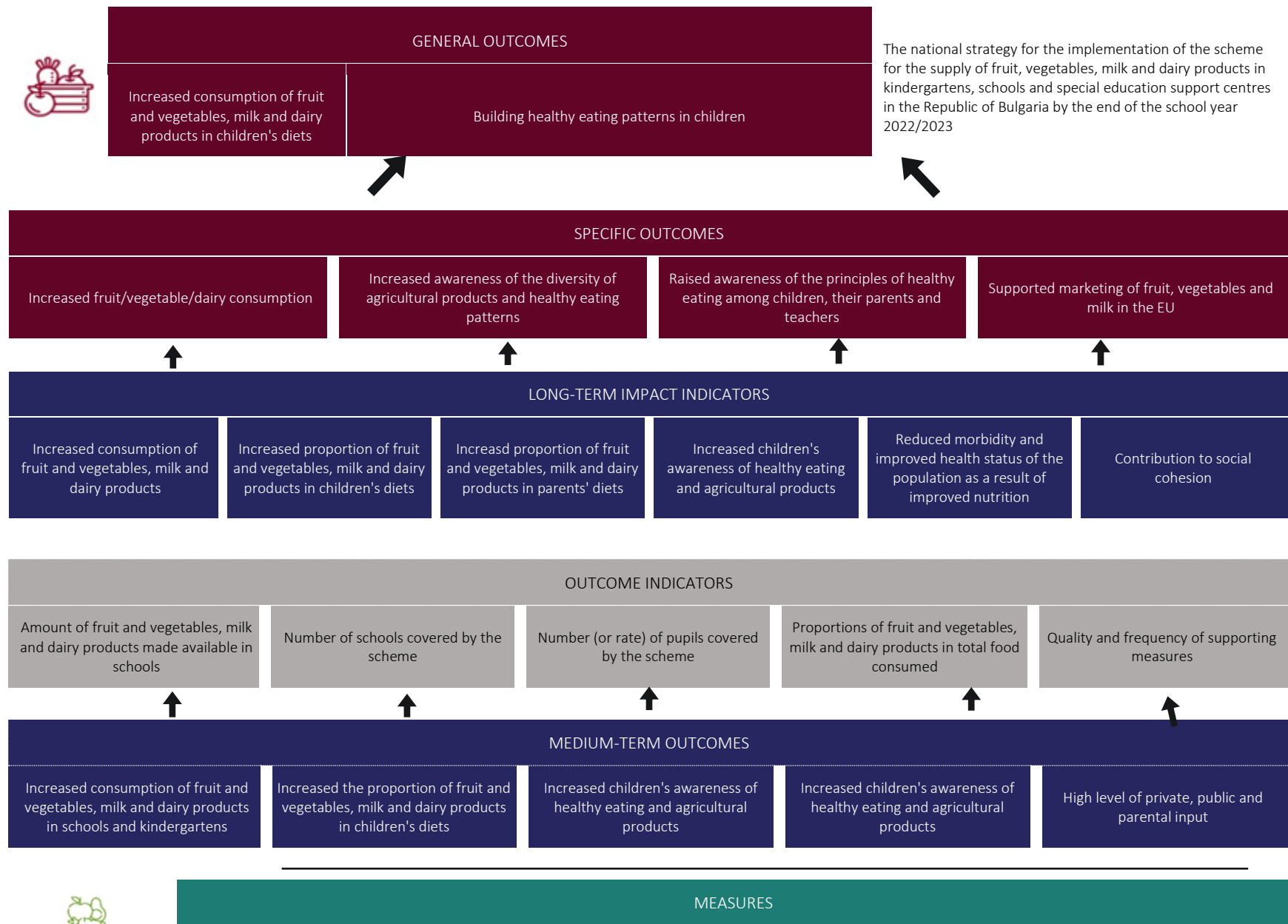
discussion was active and productive. On the other hand, the representatives of the institutions did not respond to the invitation for a general meeting with applicants, suppliers and directors. We recommend that this subgroup be covered by in-depth interviews. Such individualization of the approach will help the participants answer without much worry, and the questions will be formulated according to their level of expertise on the subject.



4 EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL SCHEME FUNCTIONING

4.1 EVALUATION OF THE INTERVENTION LOGIC

A chart of the intervention logic is presented on the next page.



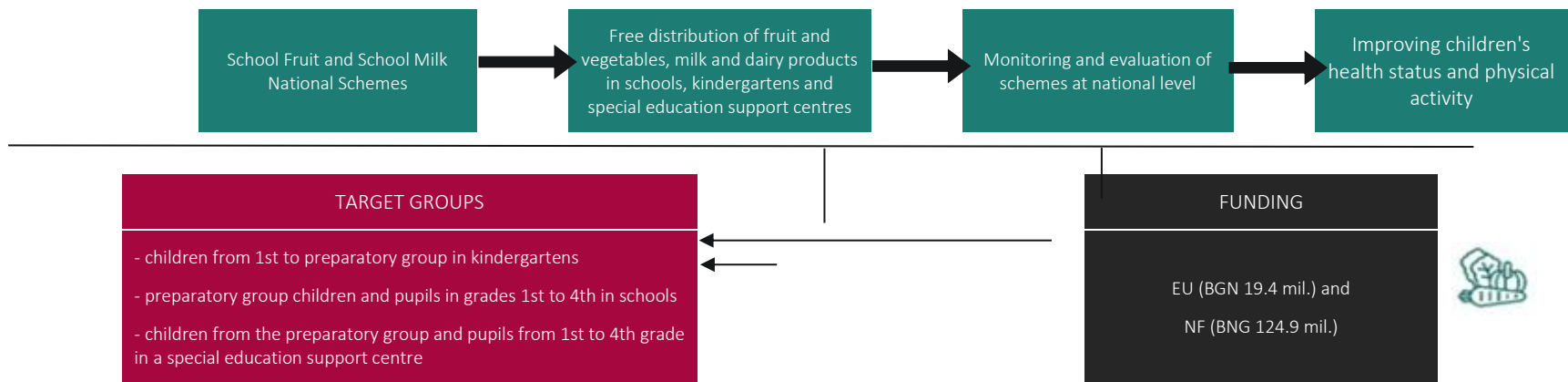


Chart1. Intervention logic

valuation of the implementation of the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments”

4.2 FUNCTIONING OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND MILK IN SCHOOLS BASED ON THE INFORMATION IN THE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS

As of the 2020/2021 school year, the School Fruit and the School Milk schemes cover about 430,000 children from the 1st to the preparatory group and students from the 1st to the 4th grades.

Table5. Number of children and students covered by the schemes, by school years. Source: Annual Monitoring Reports

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Children from first to preparatory group incl., in kindergartens	228,085	232,035	194,444	196,921
Students from 1st to 4th grade inclusive, in schools	242,800	252,874	238,305	232,253
Total	470,885	484,909	432,749	429,174

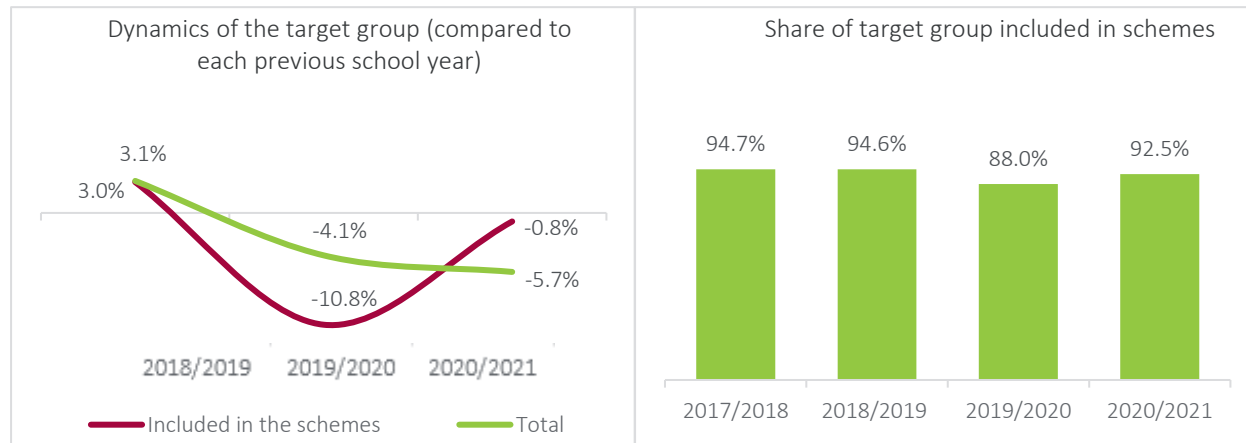
As can be seen from the previous table, the number of children and students included in the schemes has decreased over the last two school years, with the difference in absolute values being 40 thousand (or 8.9% less) from 2017/18 to 2020/21. Such a decline can be explained in two ways:

- The smaller number of children and students, representatives of the target group, is caused by the demographic characteristics of the country;
- The COVID-19 pandemic and the constantly changing status of the learning process between present and remote.

A noticeable decrease is registered in the school year 2019/20 - nearly 11 percentage points fewer representatives of the target group participated in the Scheme, compared to the previous year. Although the entire school year 2020/21 was accompanied by the COVID-19 pandemic, the lighter measures imposed on the educational establishments for children and the youngest students after the full lockdown allowed the number of children and students included in the schemes to grow. A similar statement is also confirmed by the share of the target group included in the School Fruit scheme and School Milk scheme. **In the 2020/21 school year, the schemes covered nearly 93% of the total planned number of representatives of the target groups.** A share approaching the pre-epidemic 95%. It is noteworthy, however, that kindergartens have been able to adapt to the "new normal" faster than schools. In the 2020/21 school year, 97% of the National Strategy's children in kindergartens participated in the schemes, while this share in schools was 89%, or 4 percentage points less, compared to the 2017/18 school year.



Chart3. Dynamics of the inclusion of children and students in the schemes for the period 2017/18-2020/21 school years. Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations



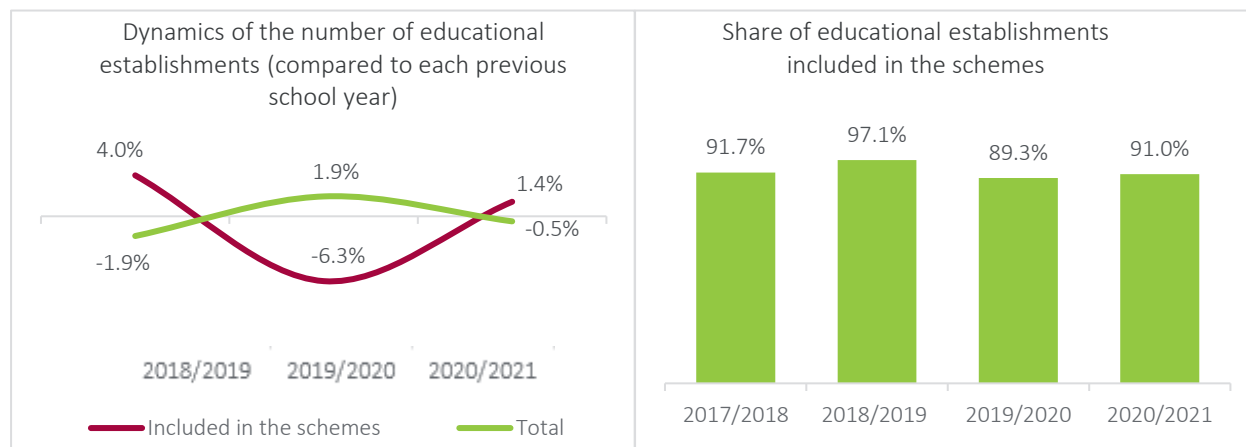
As of 2020/21, the total number of educational establishments included in the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments is 3323, or 91% of all kindergartens and schools in the country that are planned to be included in the schemes .

Table6. Number of educational establishments included in the schemes, by school years. Source: Annual Monitoring Reports

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Kindergartens and preschools	1,701	1,767	1,678	1691
Schools (including classes from 1st to 4th grade)	1,662	1,729	1,599	1632
Total	3,363	3,496	3,277	3,323

There are no drastic deviations registered in terms of the number of educational establishments included in the schemes within each school year. A more serious drop (of -6.3 percentage points compared to the previous school year), logically, was observed during the 2019/2020 school year and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chart4. Dynamics of educational establishments included in the schemes for the period 2017/18-2020/21 school years. Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations





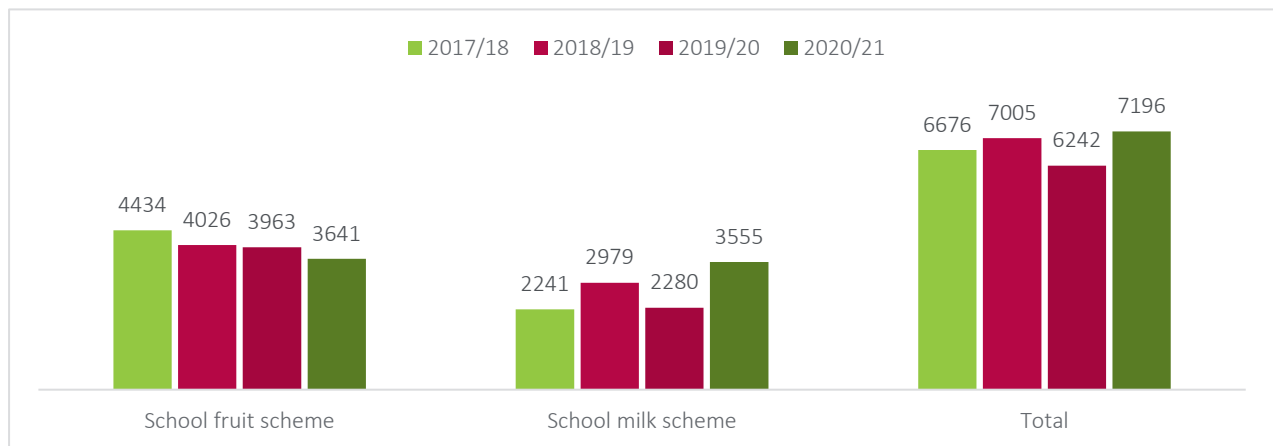
4.2.1 Implementation of the scheme parameters

This sub-item studies the implementation of parameters such as volume of products provided, number of distributed portions, size of portions, frequency of distribution of products and period of implementation of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments. There is no change observed regarding the last two characteristics - during the considered period **the target group received products under the School Fruit scheme and School Milk scheme twice a week, within the whole school year.**

Despite the decrease in the number of children and students due to demographic reasons, the total volume of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products distributed in educational establishments has increased within the 4-year period under review. **In the school year 2020/21, nearly 7,200 tonnes of products were distributed to the target group** under the School Fruit and School Milk Scheme, which is 8 percentage points more than in the 2017/18 school year.

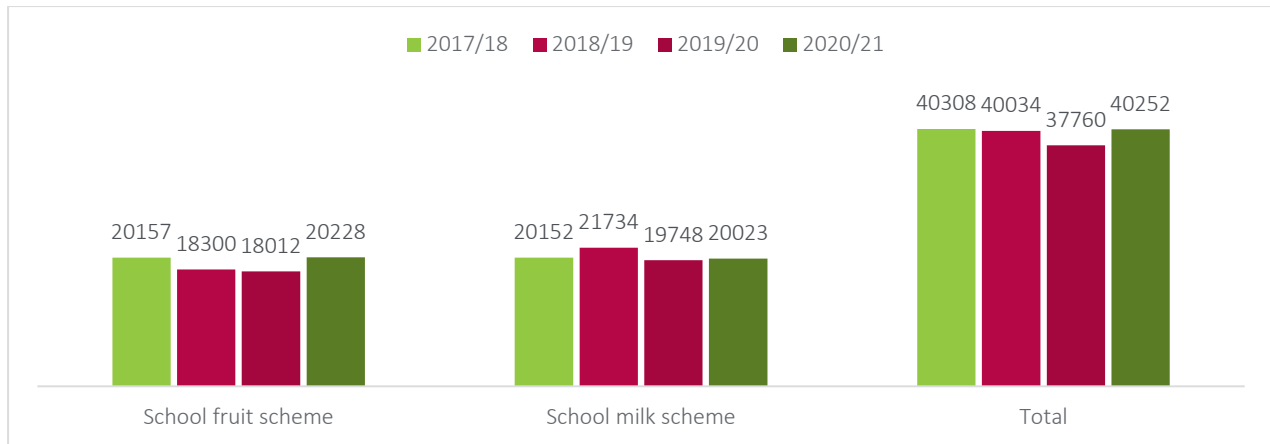
The increase in the total volume of delivered and distributed products is due to the inclusion of more milk and milk products, at the expense of fruits and vegetables. In the 2020/21 school year, the School Milk scheme reached the target kindergartens and schools with 59% more products compared to 2017/18. At the same time, the difference in the volume of products distributed under the School Fruit scheme in the first and the last school year subject to this report is -18 percentage points, from the perspective of 2020/21 compared to 2017/18. Starting four years ago with half the amount of distributed products, however, the School Milk scheme managed to match the School Fruit scheme in volume in 2020/21.

Chart5. Volume of distributed products for the period 2017/18-2020/21 school years (volume in tons; 1 ton = 1000 kg or liters). Source: Annual Monitoring Reports



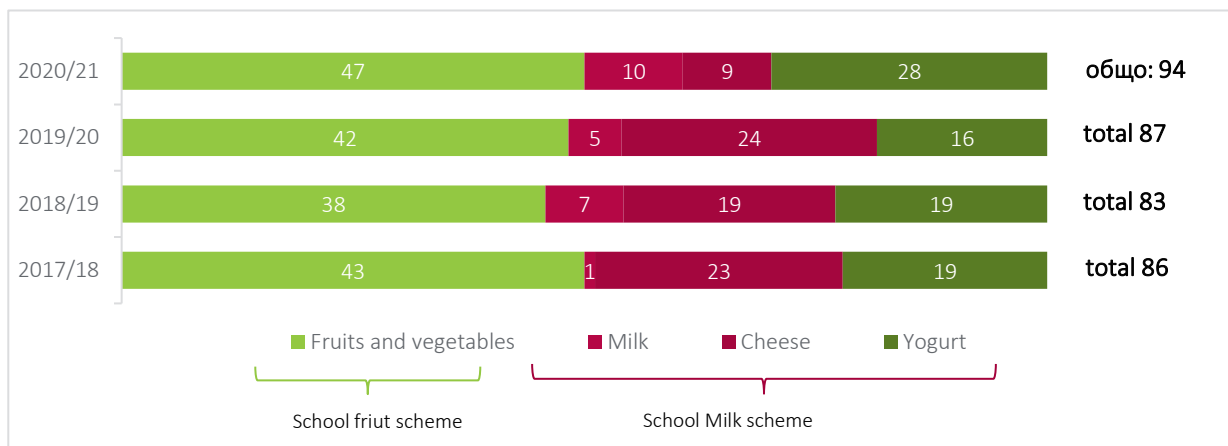
Despite the differences in the quantity of products, the number of portions, reaching the target group under the two school schemes, are identical. Only within the school year 2020/21, the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments has distributed over 40 million portions among nearly 430 thousand children and students up to the age of 10.

Chart6. Total number of portions distributed in the period 2017/18-2020/21 school years (in thousands). Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations



Distributed at child or student level, the portions of products received¹ have increased over the years, reaching **94 portions per year** received under the Scheme for provision of fruit, vegetables and milk products in educational establishments. Within the school year 2020/21, ten times more portions of milk, 1.5 times more yogurt and 4 more portions of fruits and vegetables were distributed, compared to 2017/18.

Chart7. Number of portions received under each scheme within one academic year, at child or student level, for the period 2017/18-2020/21 school years. Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations



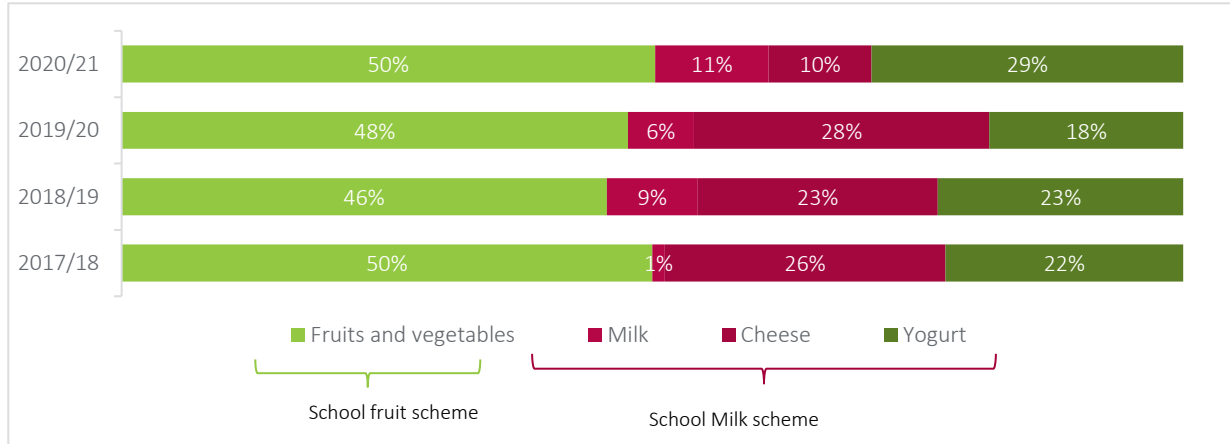
Expressed as a share of all distributed portions, we can see that the School Fruit Scheme and the School Milk Scheme are equally present in their distribution among the target group. In all the years under review, fruits and vegetables make half of the rations that children and schoolchildren receive under the schemes. However, with regard to the products distributed within the School Milk scheme, there are differences in the shares of the different portions of products. Milk is the smallest part of the total ration, registering below 10% in almost all the years under review. Cheese, for its part, has significantly reduced its share since 2017/18, and in

¹ The number of portions is calculated based on the information on the volume (in kilograms and liters) of distributed products, divided by the weight of one portion (specified for each product in the Monitoring Reports).



2020/21 children and students receive 2.5 times less of this product, at the expense of more milk and yogurt.

Chart8. Share of portions received under each scheme within a school year, at child or student level, for the period 2017/18-2020/21 school years. Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations



4.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCOMPANYING EDUCATIONAL MEASURES TO SUPPORT THE DISTRIBUTION OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND MILK AMONG CHILDREN

Pursuant to Article 23(10) of Regulation (EU) No. 1308/2013, EU Member States shall provide for accompanying measures to ensure the effectiveness of the Schools Scheme. Accompanying is understood to be those educational measures that are aimed at restoring the connection between children and agriculture (for example, visiting farms, addressing topics related to food waste, healthy eating habits, etc.).

The accompanying educational measures in support of the distribution of fruits, vegetables and milk among children are key to the upbringing of adolescents in this direction. According to the Monitoring Reports, only during the school year 2020/21 there were funds allocated from the budget aimed at accompanying educational measures. Within this school year, a total of 679,244 BGN were used under this item, with nearly 65% of the funds allocated from the national budget, and the remaining 35% provided free of charge by the EU. 7.4% of the entire annual budget for the school year 2020/21 of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments is allocated for accompanying educational measures. **Within the school year 2020/21, about BGN 2,179,332 is planned for accompanying educational measures, and only 1/3 of the planned amount has been spent.** Calculated on the basis of the number of children and students covered by the scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments and the funds spent, it can be stated that **the accompanying educational measures cost BGN 1.58 per representative of the target group, with provided 5.08 BGN per child or student.**

According to the Monitoring Report for the school year 2020/21, accompanying educational measures were implemented to support the distribution of fruits, vegetables and milk among children in the following topics:

- Reconnecting children to agriculture



- Healthy eating habits
- Organic farming

The qualitative survey carried out among stakeholders of the scheme confirms the view that **the accompanying educational measures are insufficient** and that not all the possibilities that the scheme offers in this regard have been used. On the one hand, this is due to the critical situation in the school year 2020/21 created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The frequent change of the form of learning and the restrictions related to the organization of events and transport of groups strongly influence the implementation of the accompanying educational measures. It is noteworthy, however, that during the school years prior to 2020/21, the funds allocated under this category were not absorbed at all, despite the provision of over BGN 2 million per year. The lack of a budget and the feeling that such measures should be covered by the educational establishment itself is shared by most representatives of the educational institutions we spoke with.

“On some other occasion, if a farm is visited... I don't know how possible it is to combine things. For example, if we take a field trip at the end of the year and visit some landmark, such as the Rose Valley, an ostrich farm, or something else that will be of interest to the students, will it be reported as an activity under the Ordinance? This is not clear to me and we can raise it as a question.” **Educational Institution, South Central District**

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“There is no way to organize them, due to lack of such a budget. Our budgets are at a minimum. It is very good if you participate in innovative projects or programs and include different trades. Then you're already doing it at your own expense, but you can't take advantage of such a thing. Otherwise, it's very good, because my childhood also passed in the same way. I have seen how everything is done to get to the final product, which is very nice. Today's kids don't know that, unfortunately. Whatever we talk about, it's all about finance. That's it.” **Educational Institution, Northwest Region**

In the event it is proceeded to a more targeted implementation of the educational measures and their scale is deployed (for example, organizing visits to farms, gardens and others recommended in the Strategy), it is extremely important to communicate the program/gratuitous nature of such measures.

M: Why can't they be implemented?

R: Because there is no established system for funds to be used for such purposes. Farm visits could be made, but all this is related to funds, and schools do not have the opportunity to initiate such initiatives with their own funds.

Educational Institution, Northeast Region.

The national strategy foresees the following accompanying educational measures:

- Visits to farms, milk processing plants, farmers markets, etc.
- School gardens
- Tasting classes, cooking workshops, etc.
- Lessons, lectures, workshops
- Other activities: competitions, games, thematic periods



According to the Monitoring Report for 2021/22, 2 of the 5 educational measures specified in the strategy have been implemented: classes, lectures, workshops and other activities: competitions, games and thematic periods. The total number of children covered by the two educational measures is 429,174 representatives of the target group or the total number of participants in the school schemes in the school year 2021/2022. **The strategy requires at least one accompanying measure to be implemented in each educational establishment during each reporting period.** Respondents indicate the following educational measures of the scheme: class discussions, games, keeping an organic garden and other.

M: And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and milk products organized in schools?

R: Such are organized at the form tutor's class to get familiar with healthy foods.

Educational Institution, Northeast Region

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„Yes. In the activities of interest of the groups in case of all-day organization of the school day, there are such topics, where the colleagues hold discussions, have healthy eating drawing, make boards. The posters provided by you are also in the dining room“

Educational Institution, North Central Region

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“We have a medical person who, according to a schedule drawn up according to Ordinance 13, in the form tutor's class presents exactly such topics about a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.” In addition, our students are on a full-day form of education and in the activities by interest they make various stickers and posters.“

Educational Institution, South Central Region

The educational measures that are implemented in the educational establishments are insufficient and are often part of the educational program of schools and kindergartens, without the scheme having an impact on their implementation. Given the availability of a budget from last school year, as well as the absence of restrictions due to COVID-19, it is advisable to intensify the activities in this sector. The existence of close and fruitful cooperation between the state institutions concerned with the implementation of the school schemes is of great importance for the success of future accompanying measures. The main role is played by the Ministry of Education, which, according to the National Strategy, is responsible for implementing the accompanying educational measures. At the same time, however, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and the State Fund Agriculture could be involved in the organization of site visits to agricultural holdings, the creation and maintenance of organic gardens and other, more practically oriented measures. **The local applicants/suppliers under the schemes, who are in direct contact with the local producers, who are aware of the objectives and tasks of the school schemes and often initiate accompanying educational measures themselves, could also be involved for support.**

R: I just want to add something that we have not paid attention to for years because we are engaged with some other cases. The accompanying measures are great, but they are inaccessible for schools.



Attention should be paid on that and thus many children will be engaged in the program. At the moment, the accompanying measures are not applicable by schools.

M: Why?

R: That's how they are planned and there is no information to the principal so as to organize them together.

Applicant, Southeast Region

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"We have also stimulated this increase in products by the kids by organizing competitions for drawings, that we've made calendars out of. Apart from that, we are trying to send different entertaining games to educational establishments every month, with the aim of being able to arouse interest in children. It shall be worked in this direction. What the lady said about the organic garden is wonderful and I think that we should work in that direction."

Applicant, Southwest Region

In conclusion, it can be stated that the accompanying educational measures at this time are extremely insufficient and inapplicable. There is a lack of communication between the stakeholders of the scheme and often the directors of the educational establishments refrain from more large-scale and practically oriented accompanying educational measures due to lack of their own budget. Current educational measures are stationary, often implemented as part of the curriculum, and influenced very little by the implementation of the school measures. Along with the availability of educational materials, a system for implementing measures with a greater practical focus should be created. The applicants for some of whom their participation in the scheme is a cause can be drawn in for this purpose, they know the local producers and peculiarities of the environment and are in direct contact with the directors of the educational establishments. For their part, the responsible institutions should create a system with a clearly allocated budget, as well as communicate the financial parameters (for example, that such measures are free) and the reduced administrative burden (for example, that they are part of a project activity and the documentation is less).

4.4 EVALUATION OF THE MAIN ARRANGEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS

For the period 2017-2021 school years, a little over 82 million BGN were spent within the framework of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments.

Table 7. Total spent budget (in thousands of BGN). Source: Annual Monitoring Reports

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
EU	7365	5608	7479	7165
National budget	14,755	13,722	10,510	15,425
Total	22,120	19,329	17,989	22,591

With the exception of the school year 2017/18, the allocated funds from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the national budget are not fully absorbed. Even in the pre-pandemic school year 2018/19, one third of the planned budget was not spent as intended. It is important to note that table 7 and table 8 present information on the implementation of the



budget in all its parts - distribution of fruits and vegetables/milk in schools, funds for accompanying educational measures, as well as funds for monitoring, evaluation and publicity. A more detailed breakdown of "planned-spent" funds shows that the low absorption rate is mainly due to the item "Educational Accompanying Measures". In view of the identified deficits and the advocacy of the stakeholders to introduce accompanying educational measures, it is more than advisable to create a working mechanism for their organization.

Table8. Percentage of utilization of funds. Source: Decisions on final distribution of funds for the period 2017-2021, own calculations

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
EU	98.0%	77.0%	102.0%	98.8%
National budget	121.7%	61.8%	47.4%	69.5%
Total	112.6%	65.6%	60.9%	76.7%

The price per kilogram or liter of product that is paid under the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments can be determined as acceptable. During the 2020/2021 school year, the price per kilogram of fruits or vegetables rises to BGN 2.40 and approaches the values from before the pandemic. With regard to milk and milk products, we observe a drop in price compared to the pandemic year 2019/2020 and in the past school year, 1 kilogram/liter of milk or milk products cost the Scheme 3.70 BGN.

Table9. Price per kilogram/liter of products (in BGN). Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
School fruit	2.69	2.06	2.04	2.40
School milk	4.54	3.71	4.34	3.70

The price per portion of fruits or vegetables can also be perceived as good. It is to be noted that the price of 1 portion of fruits or vegetables has decreased over the years, while that of 1 portion of milk or milk products has increased. Given the current inflation processes and unstable domestic and international environment, it is more than likely that the prices of these products will increase, in parallel with the costs of their transportation, storage and others.

Table10. Price per 1 portion (in BGN) Source: Annual Monitoring Reports, own calculations

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
School fruit	0.59	0.45	0.45	0.43
School milk	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.66

Summarized information by main indicators within the framework of the implementation of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments for the 2020/21 school year is presented in the following figure:



4.5 EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITIES IN THE FILED OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE RECOGNITION OF THE SCHOOL SCHEME

The monitoring reports indicate that minimal funds are spent each year on publicity, information dissemination, monitoring and evaluation, and the trend of the last few years is for these costs to decrease. For the school year 2020/21, only about BGN 1,300 have been allocated for this purpose, and 90% of this amount is provided by the state budget.

Table 11. Costs for information, monitoring and evaluation (in BGN). Source: Annual Monitoring Reports

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
EU	796	216	370	136
National budget	10,154	3,384	3,330	1227
Total	10,950	3,600	3,700	1,364

The Monitoring Reports indicate the presence of posters in educational establishments as specific measures for publicity and dissemination of information. It is recommended that the communication activities be expanded and cover other measures specified by the EU, such as the maintenance of an Internet site, the distribution of information materials and others, which would not require a large human and financial resource.

Such a recommendation is feasible, given that the Strategy provides for 4.1% (or approximately BGN 4,100,000)² of the total budget for these items. As stated earlier in the text, within the four years, subject of the present analysis, the costs for accompanying educational activities, publicity, monitoring and evaluation amounted to 0.8% (or BGN 356,332) of the total costs.

The participants in the group discussions share the opinion that publicity measures are insufficient and information materials are scarce.

M: Okay. The rest, do you have anything to add about any additional things that can be done within the schemes?

R: More advertising. Two posters are brought to us, but maybe there shall be more flyers, more advertising to parents. Thematic calendars advertising the School Fruit and School Milk scheme can be made.

Applicant, Southwest Region

It is precisely because of the low levels of awareness that there is a misunderstanding on the part of the children's parents about the objectives of the schemes, which in turn leads to wrong expectations and disapproval when these expectations are not met. As further stated in the report, for some parents the school schemes are not ancillary programs, but should fulfill the function of the main source of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products for their children. Such a misunderstanding also strongly affects the image of the scheme, as it is concluded that it is not fulfilling its obligations. It is extremely important to communicate the following topics with parents: the objectives of the school schemes, the recommendations of the experts on healthy

² The calculations are based on a total estimated budget for a 6-year period (1.8.2017 – 31.7.2023), equally distributed by years.



eating for children of a certain age group, the scope of the schemes (what is offered), the standards by which products are selected and others.

"I believe it is very important for parents to know the main objectives of this program and the supplies that we make. The main one is building healthy habits in children. Many of the parents think that these products are given solely and exclusively for feeding the children and are part of their daily breakfast or afternoon snack. This information has no way of reaching the parents through us. It would be good for schools to provide this information at the beginning of the school year"

Applicant, Northeast Region

A variety of information dissemination channels can be worked out. First of all, the already existing sources should be used - for example, through the channels of the Ministry of Education and Culture in social networks, with which it communicates directly with parents; by presenting the scheme during parent meetings; by creating groups on social networks and a site to be maintained regularly and others.

"My suggestion for promoting these schemes is: The Ministry of Education and Culture created a Viber channel on which they publish any information of any nature. It would be good, at the beginning of the school year, when starting these activities, that such informational announcements be made for parents to know. Everyone is now using Viber etc. You see, in the field of education, bad news spreads very quickly, and good news is not advertised. My suggestion is that through the MoE channels, which they use to promote all kinds of projects, they should do the same for these schemes."

Educational Institution, South Central Region

For improvement/building a positive image of the school schemes it is of importance to differentiate them from other school meal programs, it overlaps with (e.g. main breakfast and snack). Emphasis should be placed on the complementary nature of the school schemes and that the emphasis is on the quality of the products rather than the quantity.

4.6 INVOLVEMENT OF COMPETENT HEALTH AND FOOD AUTHORITIES, OTHER PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS RELATED TO PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION

The stakeholders (applicants, suppliers and representatives of educational establishments) evaluate the overall process of implementing the school schemes as successful and relatively easy, but they do not hide some peculiarities that make it difficult to fulfill their tasks.

Regarding the initial stage of implementation

The majority of applicants who participated in the focus groups share that the application process is easy, fast and adapted to the specifics of the school scheme. Certain remarks are made about the quantity of documents that must be collected and presented, as well as the lack of opportunity for using digital services. It is the latter that is cited as the biggest drawback of the entire process of implementing the school schemes. This type of administrative burden is characteristic of a large part of the Bulgarian administration, and the provision of the possibility of online application implies the implementation of a similar policy at the national level. However, one of the recommendations that can be made is to take steps specifically to modernize the application system.



"Regarding all the application documents and the whole procedure, I haven't had any difficulties or problems. No, it is not easy and there are a lot of documents to collect, but they are simple and elementary things. I personally have no difficulties with the application. It's the easiest part of the whole process."

Applicant, Northeast Region

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R: The application procedure itself proceeds through the established channel and there is nothing to worry about. There is nothing slow, cumbersome or embarrassing.

R: There is really nothing to worry about. Everything is fine with the way of application and with the speed with which the documents are processed.

Applicants, South Central Region

The applicants also presented a few more purely organizational obstacles, which, however, do not have a strong impact on the quality implementation of the scheme, but rather they should be seen as feedback. It would be good to take these seemingly minor difficulties into account and, if necessary, adjust them according to the specifics of the environment. **The application deadline** is mentioned as one of these "obstacles". Some of the applicants advanced arguments that the deadline for submitting an application should not start from the first day of the month, but a few days should be given for internal processing of the documents.

R: I would share a few more issues. If you are an external evaluation company, you can propose that the deadline for receiving documents every month be changed. The request should not be from the 1st to the 10th, but from the 5th to the 15th. How can you get a document on the 1st when you're transporting a product on the 30th and a multiple handing over documents, etc., have to be prepared?

R: That's exactly what happened this year as well . Even the State Fund Agriculture gets irritated when it is in the last days - around the 9th and 10th. I agree that the deadline should be extended.

Applicants, Northwest Region

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"I think that the information provided by the State Fund Agriculture when applying is complete and clear enough. What I would appeal to is, if possible, that the documents and the application forms be published a little earlier, because at the last minute there is a panic and you have to react a little faster.

What I can also wish for is that one day we will be able to apply online and will not have to submit paper documents in the State Fund Agriculture.

Applicant, Southwest Region

The **Schedules** that the educational establishments provide and are approved at the beginning of the school year are also identified as part of the process that can be improved. The main concern of the applicants is that the schedules that the principals provide in September are not final and often undergo changes that do not reach applicants as information. If resources allow, it is advisable to create a single system or platform where both parties to the schemes can easily and quickly communicate, for example by uploading and/or updating important information within the schemes.

"In my opinion, the submittal of schedules by each educational establishment when applying is unnecessary. After the approval by the State Fund Agriculture, if there is an adjustment, all the vacations for the next year have not yet been published, and it is unnecessary to sign these schedules



during the application itself.
Applicant, Southwest Region

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"This is an absolutely unnecessary bureaucracy, now to form and do something that we are sure will change and that we will have to do again when starting the activity. It's not about dropping off the schedules, it's about not submitting them when applying, but submitting them when deliveries start."

Applicant, Southwest Region

Such a system would also be of great help to applicants in terms of obtaining timely and up-to-date information on **the number of enrolled children and students**, part of the schemes. It is this aspect that turns out to be highly problematic, because it is bound with non-fulfillment of the agreements under the scheme, and hence leads to sanctions by the SFA.

"The next thing is the number of children. It's about the portions. We have nowhere to see what is the number approved and authorized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. After 3 months we receive information that the principal has signed all the requests, all the protocols, etc., and there were 5 or 15 children less according to the administrative system. Where can I see it and what am I to blame?!"

Applicant, Northwest Region

Regarding the financial part

Undoubtedly, pricing and reimbursement of eligible costs is a sensitive and important subject for scheme applicants. They often allude to the poor profitability of their participation in the schemes, even operating at a loss. Although the righteousness of such a position is difficult to confirm within the scope of this report with the methods used to gather information, it is important to mention several important aspects of the participants' opinions. First of all, understandably, the topic of the **need for more frequent (at least twice) indexation/adjustment of prices is raised**. The main concerns of the applicants stem from the long-term unstable situation in the country and the world, constantly growing inflation, gas and electricity prices and others.

"The second problem is that according to the Ordinance, they have to adjust our prices twice a year. Especially in the this coming year, with this inflation that is unpredictable, we will insist on having at least two price updates, because no one can tell us what will be the cost of electricity, of transport, of gas and all these things. When they start giving prices, I don't know where they get them from, but every time it's some kind of nightmarish story - we start the program

and we don't have prices!"
Applicant, Northeast Region

Another inconvenience caused by the financial policy of the school schemes is the so-called "the eligible cost recovery methodology". Although they express understanding and are aware of the time required to process the reporting documents, there is often dissatisfaction with the long period of time over which eligible expenses are reimbursed.

R: We responded that the pricing methodology was incorrect and harmful to suppliers, especially in this difficult, wartime and pandemic period. The methodology does not correspond to the realities.

R: Excuse me, we understand the administrative potential of the State Fund Agriculture and that they are doing the impossible, but four months to recover the funds at this difficult time of lack of funding, of depreciation, of



inflation is a lot
Applicants, Northwest Region.

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"This year, the State Fund Agriculture is working better and better in this direction. We would like to be paid a week after we give the request because we have already incurred the cost of purchasing the goods, paid the employees, paid the rent, electricity and everything else. Years ago there was a delay of 2-4 months. Production we had delivered in September was paid to us in January. Things are much better now."

Applicant, South Central Region

The long period for reimbursement of costs is explained with the large set of documents that must be processed manually, as well as the lack of a direct, centralized system for submitting the reporting documents directly to the SFA. Here too, as with regard to the application documents, a proposal is made to shorten the time for processing and transporting them from the towns of the countryside to Sofia, through the development and introduction of an online tool.

"However, the refund application procedure is quite outdated. If there is a software that sends this data automatically, by pressing a button, when you are ready with the documents, and all this information automatically goes to Sofia, we will skip the moment with the paper submission to the Regional Food Safety Directorate. This documentation can go directly to Sofia and the whole process can be shortened."

Applicant, Southeast Region

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"Otherwise, the recovery process is slow and outdated. There is room for improvement. Most of our colleagues have made software and programs. Almost nothing is counted by a calculator or by hand anymore. Everything is written by a program that does my monthly documents in 20 minutes. I can submit to the State Fund Agriculture the information that my program prepares with one button and we can avoid this whole process of collecting signatures from every principal, etc."

Applicant, Southeast Region

The unfavorable economic situation of the country, as well as the rules for the implementation of the school schemes, stimulate some of the applicants to find ways to save costs in contrast to the Ordinance. Within the group discussions, it is mentioned about suppliers who make compromises with the quality of the products or do not fulfill the requirements for weight and number of deliveries. And while such an act is subject to serious sanctions, some of the applicants define the actions of their colleagues as "justified" because of the difficult situation in which they find themselves. Such views may be taken as a sign of the presence of unregulated practices by applicants on a larger scale.

"Look, one thing you should recommend and everyone in this country should understand - there are no idiots, or if there are, they are few. It is at the expense of something, and what is deplorable at the moment is that it is at the expense of the children. Either a compromise with the quality, or tricks with the weights, or tricks with the numbers are sought, but this should not be so – forcing the participant to look for some loopholes due to an impasse."

Applicant, Northwest Region

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M: They mentioned [applicants from other planning areas] that some providers find some 'loopholes'.

R: Yes, there are such too. With documents.

M: Or with less weight. Or they make one delivery of all the fruits for the month. Have you heard of such cases?

R: There are probably colleagues who make one delivery and save money. I can't.

Applicant, North Central Region

The applicants do not hide information regarding the specifics of the market. Various types of unfair methods on the part of large suppliers and producers are often indicated, such as selling a certain type of product (especially organic) at a price close to the one announced by the SFA in order to make more profit in an almost monopolized market. Such practices increase the sense of unfairness and encourage the use of non-regulated or devious methods during implementation.

R: The big citrus suppliers we buy from are very aware of the schemes and there is no fair competition. They are familiar with the amounts paid to us by the educational establishments. They know very well.

M: That is, they deliberately set prices that leave you with a small profit?

R: Exactly. Organic producers in Bulgaria are the same way. They are very aware of the amount we receive per child and set prices for us that are not very fair, since they offer the same product to other large chains at twice the lower price. At least I have such information. That is, we do not have fair competition.

Applicant, North Central Region

Attitude to changes to the Ordinance

Certain remarks are also made regarding the constant changes in the Ordinance and the shifting of the focus from schemes aimed at children to areas that aim to benefit and develop local production, and even certain circles of producers. It is generally believed that in its current form the Ordinance works best and there is no need to make changes regarding the distribution of Bulgarian-foreign production, the number of deliveries of organic products and the variety of products.

"I am of the same opinion. Rather, the frequent changes to the Ordinance that have occurred in recent years have created extreme pressure, both in reporting and in application. In the current version of the Ordinance, each of the colleagues manages to handle both the preparation of applications for approval and the reporting documents."

Applicant, Northeast Region

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"I have always said that the focus of this program is the children. It can be also to stimulate production, but this should be the drop in the ocean, not the main thing. Only and only to stimulate production, we lose all other things. What will the child understand if only an apple is given to him?! Well, they start throwing them directly into the bin because they are sick of these apples. We should really think about what the children want and we should work in this direction. Not what corporate or private interest wants, but what the children want."

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"For me, the goal is to develop these children's tastes, so that they can eat quality products, they get used to their taste, so that they can then look for it themselves. At least I think that's the objective of



the program, and with this thing will have the exact opposite effect. We should not put producers, suppliers, etc. on first place. The child must come first, because that's what this program is all about."

The focus groups were held in July, when there was a public discussion on changes to the Ordinance, some of which concerned the number of deliveries that must be made with products from Bulgarian producers. The proposal called for an increase in these supplies from 50 to 75%, and for organic products to reach 12 throughout the school year. Such a change caused strong dissatisfaction and concern about the fulfillment of the conditions under the Ordinance.

"I am of the same opinion. Rather, the frequent changes to the Ordinance that have occurred in recent years have created extreme pressure, both in reporting and in application. In the current version of the Ordinance, each of the colleagues manages to handle both the preparation of applications for approval and the reporting documents."
Applicant, South Central District

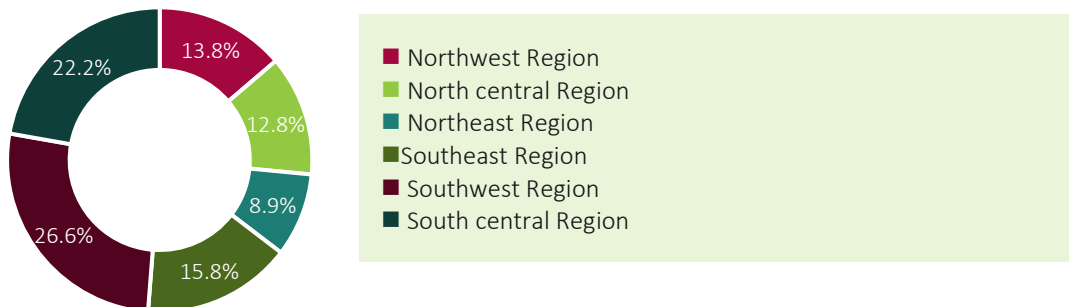


5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The largest number of completed questionnaires are registered in the South West Planning Region (nearly 6200 or 26.6% of all completed questionnaires). With 1,000 fewer, the questionnaires completed by parents and children within the South Central Planning District are in second place. Last is the least active economic planning region in the country - the Northwest, with about 2,000 completed questionnaires. The difference in the relative share of individual planning areas stems from differences in the number of residents with children falling into the target group, and to some extent the motivation of parents to participate. It is important to note, however, that the number of fully completed questionnaires is sufficient in each planning area to allow conclusions to be extrapolated.

Chart9.Planning area. [Basis: 23 158 parents]

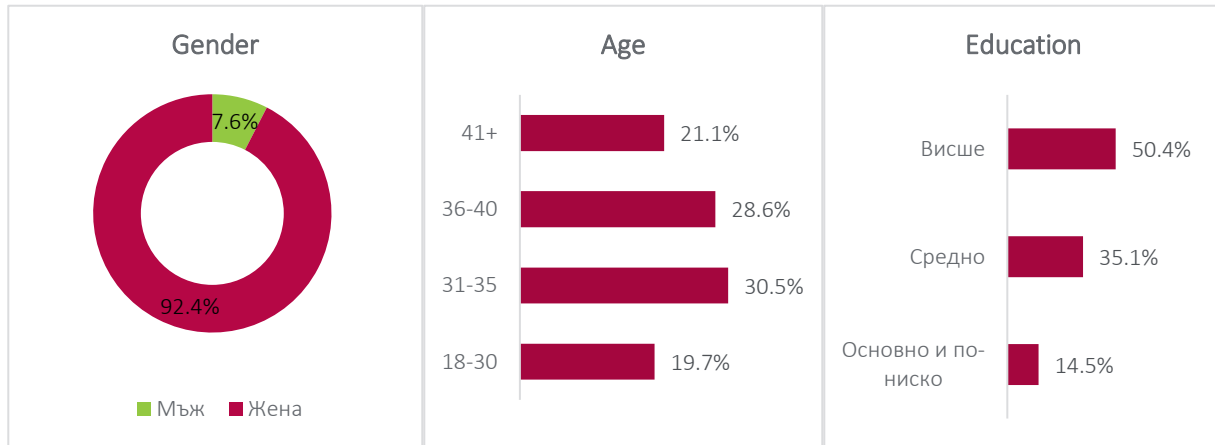


Given the data collection method chosen, it is not surprising that the survey respondents were predominantly female – just over 90% of the survey respondents were female. The average age of parents is 36 for women and 37 for men, respectively. It is also noticeable that almost all



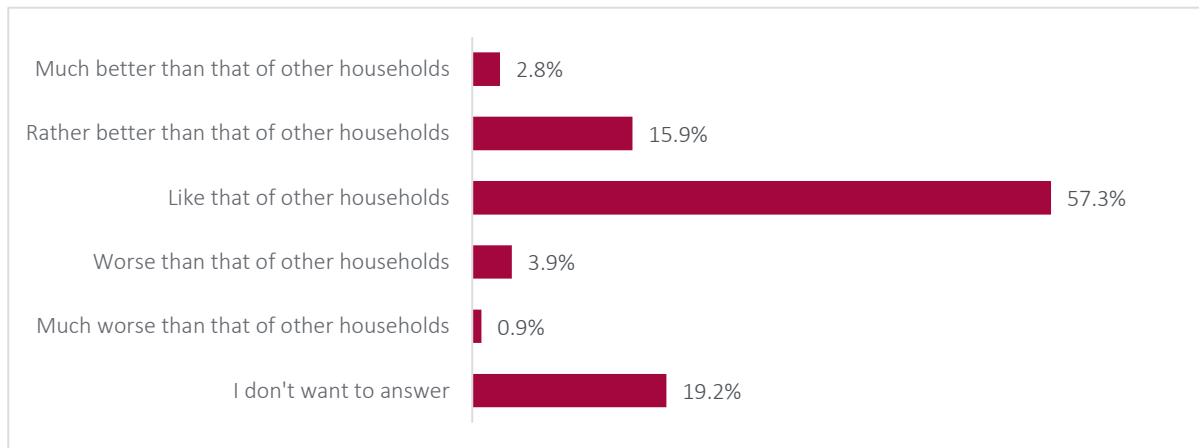
parents have at least a primary education, and as many as 50% also have a higher education diploma (or twice as much as the national average³).

Chart10. Main demographic characteristics of parents. [Basis: 23 158 parents]



Every sixth parent states that the financial situation of his family is neither better nor worse than that of other households. Parents from towns and university graduates are logically perceived to be in a better financial position. The planning area has no influence on the subjective evaluation of the respondents. In practice, this means that there is no region on the territory of the country with perceptibly drastic differences in financial capabilities between the households that inhabit it.

Chart11. Financial status of the household. [Basis: 23 158 parents]



⚠ It can be speculated that the parents covered in the survey have a higher socio-economic status than the average for the parents of the children covered by the Scheme. Such a condition should be taken into account, since it is the former who are more likely to pay more attention to the healthy diet of their children, since they can afford it. Let's not forget the fact that the survey

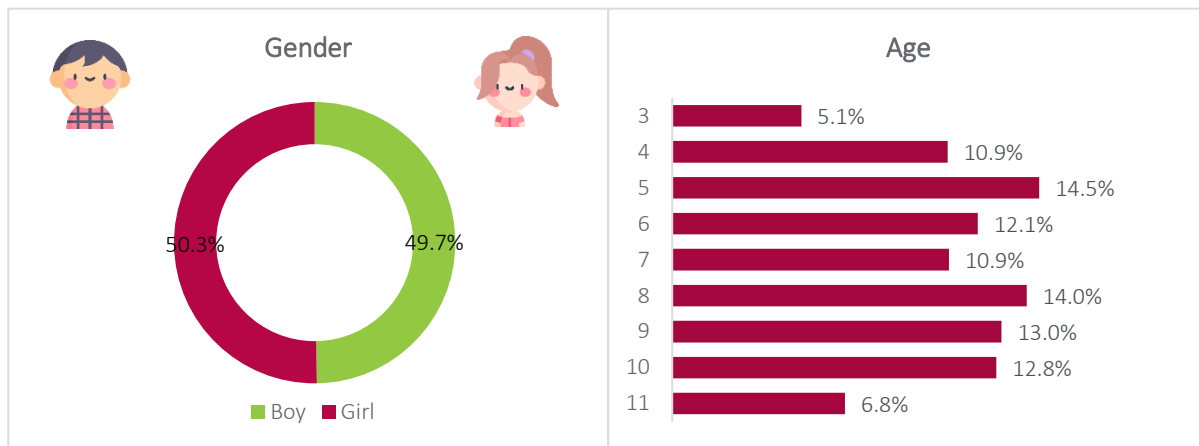
³ According to Eurostat data, 25.6% of the Bulgarians under the age of 64 have a higher education. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDAT_LFSE_03_custom_3306829/default/table?lang=en



among parents and children is representative at the level of an educational institution, and those respondents who volunteered and agreed to participate took part in the survey. Often, parents who are not strongly committed to the healthy eating of their children or are financially constrained would not be willing to be part of such a survey. From a methodological point of view, this is not a problem, as the 2016 survey with which we compare this year's results was also conducted by the respondent-type data collection method.

The children and students, part of the current study, were equally distributed by gender - as many girls as boys filled out the questionnaire together with their parents. A similar difference is not registered according to the type of school either - in both kindergartens and schools, almost the same number of girls and boys participated in the survey. Subject to the conditions that the covered children are up to the 4th grade, children up to 11 years of age are included in the study. The average age of children and students is 7, for both girls and boys.

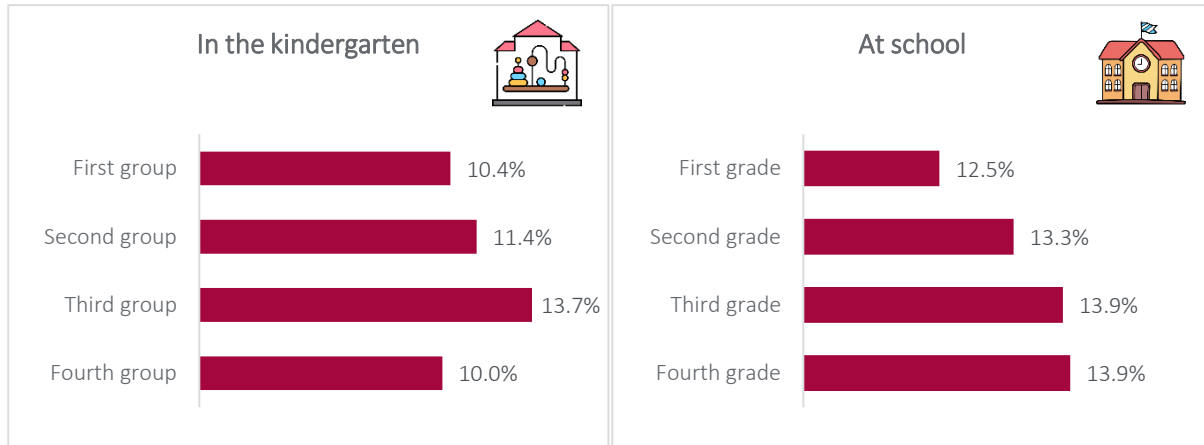
Chart12. Basic demographic characteristics of children [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



Children from kindergartens (45.5%) and schools (55.5%) are almost equally distributed. Children from the first and fourth groups in kindergartens are represented the least, but without a significant difference.



Chart13. Kindergarten group or school class of the children who participated in the study. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



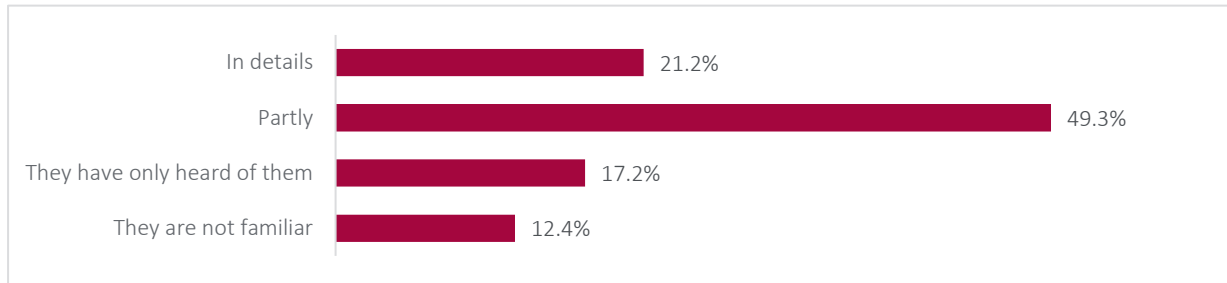
No differences are registered in the profile of parents whose children attend kindergarten and those who send their child to school. Understandably, parents of preschoolers are younger (34 years old on average) compared to those who have a student at home (37 years old). Other slight deviations from the average are observed in terms of the parents' level of education, their ethnicity and the financial status of their household. Parents of children who attend school find themselves more financially burdened, possibly because of the higher costs that a student requires.

5.2 RECOGNIZABILITY AND EVALUATION OF THE SCHEMES

The School Fruit and School Milk schemes are recognizable among parents, with nearly 9 out of 10 parents saying they have heard of or are somewhat familiar with them. Parents from the Northwest Planning Region, aged up to 30 years, with primary and lower education, from the country's ethnic minorities and people from villages are most confident in their level of familiarity with the school schemes. This means in practice that the school schemes are perceived by the lower status and vulnerable groups primarily as support for family livelihoods. Such a perception may subsequently shift the focus away from the objectives of the Fruit, Vegetable, Milk and Milk Products Scheme in educational establishments and it will be recognized it as a social tool rather than a policy for building healthy habits among children. No difference from the average values is registered among the other socio-demographic groups, which shows that information about the Schemes reaches everyone evenly.

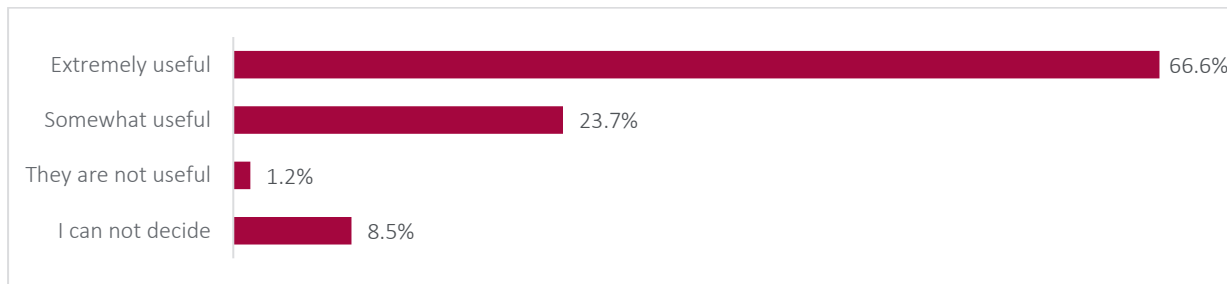


Chart14. Familiarity of the parents with school schemes. [Basis: 20 297 parents]



The school scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments is perceived as useful by almost all parents (90.3%). A strong statistical relationship is registered between the level of familiarity with the schemes and the ratings of their usefulness that parents place. Those in the know perceive the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments as extremely useful. As the degree of awareness with the schemes decreases, the respondents' certainty regarding their usefulness also decreases. Such a finding is a clear and definite sign that enhanced information measures would also lead to higher approval among parents

Chart15. Usefulness of the school schemes according to the parents [Basis: 20 297 parents]



5.3 HEALTHY EATING

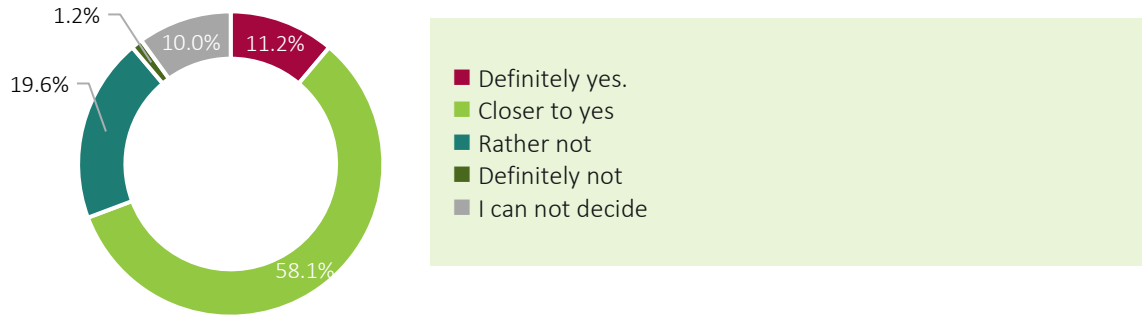
7 out of 10 parents are of the opinion that their children eat healthy. Only one of them is absolutely certain that his child's diet is completely free of harmful foods. Such a 70 percent share can be perceived as a sign of the parents' positive attitudes towards the need for their child to eat healthily, as well as their cares of making this happen. Such a conclusion, however, must be perceived bearing in mind two very important conditions. First of all, the question may cause the so-called "prestige response", that is, respondents do not want their answers to be perceived in a way that would call into question their qualities as parents. It is also important to ask how many of these 70% are actually aware of the conditions for healthy eating. An answer to this question is presented later in the report.

At the same time, there are no differences from the average results of this question in individual planning areas, as well as in villages and towns. In practice, this means that parents' attitudes towards the healthy eating of their children are the same throughout the country, and that there are no areas where access to healthy products is limited. However, some socio-demographic groups are aware that they experience difficulties in providing healthy food for their children. Parents from vulnerable groups - with low education, from ethnic groups and those who define



their financial situation as worse than others, most often share a similar opinion. Similar results also explain why more marginalized groups perceive the implementation of the Scheme as more of a social assistance.

Chart16. Would you say that your child/children eat healthily? [Basis: 23 158 parents]



6 ANSWERS TO THE GENERAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

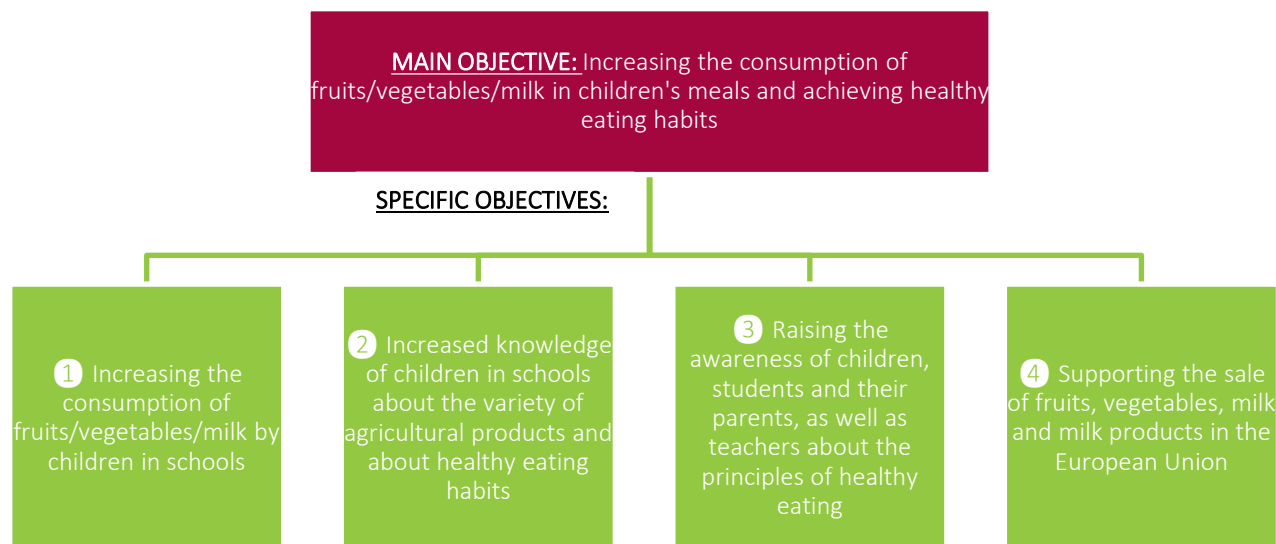
The answers to [the general evaluation questions](#) will be based on the specific [evaluation criteria](#). In order to cover the necessary information, the analysis of the data from the quantitative and qualitative surveys will be presented thematically.

6.1 TOPIC 1: IMPLEMENTATION

Evaluation criteria which will answer the question "To what extent have the schemes achieved the objectives of the National Strategy?"

The first evaluation criteria - "Implementation" aims to provide measurable information on the degree of implementation of the main and specific objectives of the Strategy, namely:

Figure2. Main and specific objectives of the National Strategy



The following table presents the realization of the performance indicators set before the survey was conducted. The results of the survey from 2016 are taken as the base values. It should be taken into account that for some indicators a change over time cannot be registered, since they were not analyzed within the study 6 years ago.

Table 12. Performance indicators

Indicator	Base value (2017)	Target value (2022)	Achieved value (2022)	Sources of information
Specific objective 1: Increasing the consumption of fruits/vegetables/milk by children in schools				
Increasing direct consumption of fruits and vegetables (when at school)	93%	95%	91% (at least once a week)	A quantitative survey among parents
Increasing indirect consumption of fruits and vegetables (when at home)	82%	85%	94% (at least once a week)	A qualitative survey among parents
Increasing the direct consumption of milk and milk products (when at school)	Missing	80%	84% (at least once a week)	A qualitative survey among parents
Increasing indirect consumption of milk and milk products (when at home)	Missing	80%	91% (at least once a week)	A qualitative survey among parents
Specific objective 2: Increased knowledge of the children in schools about the variety of agricultural products and about the healthy eating habits				
Number of fruits and vegetables children recognize	missing	Over 10	14	A quantitative survey among children and parents



Share of children familiar with the production cycle of milk and cheese	missing	75%	87%	A quantitative survey among children and parents
Specific objective 3: Raising the awareness of children, students and their parents, as well as teachers about the principles of healthy eating				
Increasing the share of children consuming the recommended intake of five or more portions of fruits and vegetables per day	43%	45%	11%	A quantitative survey among children and parents
Share of children following the national recommendations for healthy eating in terms of milk and milk products intake.	Missing	45%	12% - milk and yogurt 72% - milk products	A quantitative survey among children and parents
Share of children who are aware of the harm of consuming products with too much salt, fat, and sugar	Missing	30%	78%	A quantitative survey among children and parents
Increasing the share of children who like eating fruits and vegetables and specifying exactly which fruits and vegetables they prefer	76%	80%	97% – fruits 89% – vegetables	A quantitative survey among children and parents
Share of children who like drinking milk and eating dairy products and specifying exactly which milk products they have preferences for	Missing	80%	85% – milk and/or yogurt 64% – dairy products	A quantitative survey among children and parents
Increasing the share of children who would like to consume more fruits and vegetables, milk, and milk products	78% - fruits 55% - vegetables	80% - fruits 57% - vegetables	73% - fruits 55% - vegetables 46% - yogurt and milk 34% - milk products	A quantitative survey among children and parents

Specific objective 1: Increasing the consumption of fruits/vegetables/milk by children in schools

Weekly school fruit and vegetable consumption remained high five years after the baseline study. Over 91% of children and students say that at least once a week they consume similar products on the territory of the school or kindergarten. The intake of healthy milk and milk products is also at least once every seven days for the majority of the target group. Although these indicators do not reach the target percentage, it can be summarized that the implementation of the school schemes has helped to achieve a sustainable result in the last few years.

However, things are different in terms of the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products when the children are at home. It is noteworthy that children and students consume much more often these healthy products when they are in a family environment compared to



five years earlier. Similar results show a positive change in attitudes among the parents themselves.

Specific objective 2: Increased knowledge of the children in schools about the variety of agricultural products and about the healthy eating habits

High results are also achieved in terms of the implementation of specific objective 2: Increased knowledge of children in schools about the variety of agricultural products and about healthy eating habits'. Children and students show a highly satisfactory knowledge of the types of fruit and vegetables and the cheese production cycle.

Specific objective 3: Raising the awareness of children, students and their parents, as well as teachers about the principles of healthy eating

Regarding the implementation of specific objective 3, however, the results are not so encouraging. And here it is important to mention that to accurately measure the amount of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products consumed, it is necessary to apply a different method of data collection (described later in the report). It can be summarized that the amount of fruit and vegetables consumed by children is underestimated by the parents, while the volume of milk and milk products is increased.

The tendency to increase the share of children who openly declare that they like to eat/drink fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products can be defined as encouraging.

6.2 TOPIC 2: EFFICIENCY

6.2.1 Question No. 1

*To what extent has the Fruit, Vegetable, Milk and Milk Products Supply Scheme in Educational establishments for the period 2017/2018-2021/2022 school year **increased the overall consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products among children** in accordance with national recommendations for healthy eating of the target age group?*

Indicators:

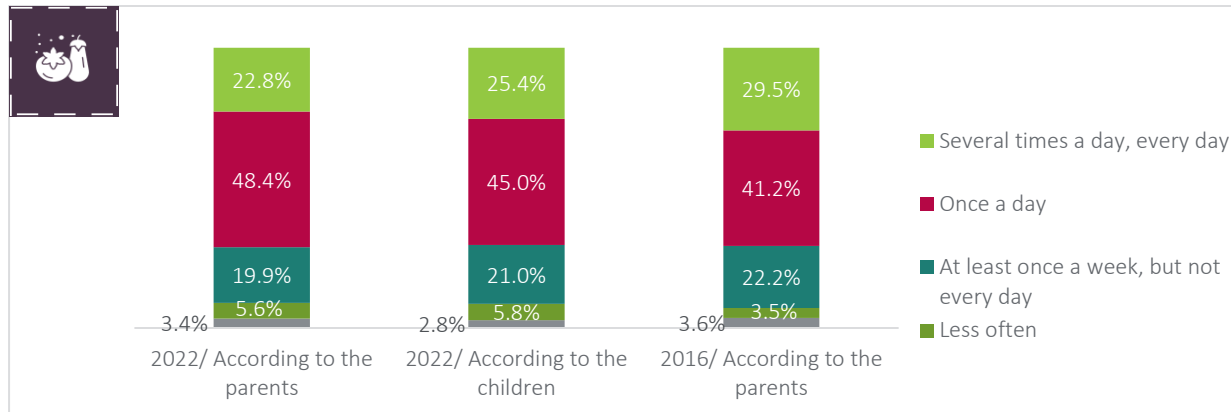




6.2.1.1 AMOUNT CONSUMED AND FREQUENCY OF CONSUMPTION

Overall, the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at school remained unchanged in 2022. Six years after the first survey, seven out of ten children up to the fourth grade consumed fruit and vegetables at least once a day. A share that is only 0.4 percentage points lower than the 70.7% measured in 2016. This practically means that the implementation of the School Fruit Scheme has contributed to maintaining the same rhythm of supply and distribution of fruits and vegetables among children. Here it is important to make the clarification that the last two years have been characterized by an unstable situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, and kindergartens and schools were the most affected. It can be speculated that the reduced consumption "several times every day" in educational establishments stems precisely from the irregular hours due to the pandemic situation in the country. The good news here is that more and more children, both according to themselves and their parents (45% and 48% respectively), consume fruit or vegetables at school once a day.

Chart17. Consumption of fruits and vegetables IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational institution]



The socio-demographic breakdown shows that the children from the villages most often consume in the educational institution, probably because of the accessibility to this type of products. Another significant difference is observed regarding the type of educational institution. 90% of children in kindergartens consume fruits and vegetables at least once a week, while in school this share drops to 55%, and in SESC - to 59%. This, of course, is mainly due to the diet of children in kindergartens and mandatory meals in these establishments.

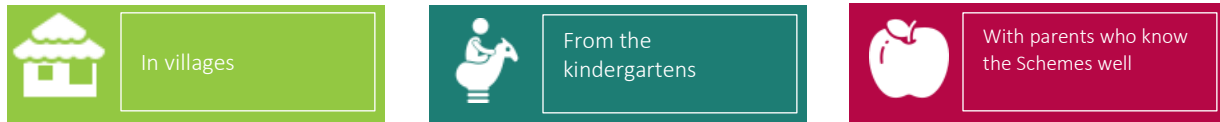
Similar results also explain the registered relationship between children's age and the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at school. The applied statistical analysis shows that the elder the children, the less likely they will eat fruits and vegetables at school. Most often, these products are consumed by children of preschool age. The option "once a day" is indicated by parents whose children are at an average age of 7 years, and "at least once a week and less often" - at an average age of 8.5 years. Such a difference is normal, and is not affected by the implementation of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments.

At the same time, a statistical relationship is registered between the degree of familiarity with the schemes and the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption by children in educational



establishments. Parents who are more familiar with school schemes also state that their child consumes fruit and vegetables several times a day in kindergarten or at school. This allows us to speculate that the implementation of the School Fruit and School Milk schemes contribute to a certain extent to the more frequent consumption of fruits and vegetables in educational establishments.

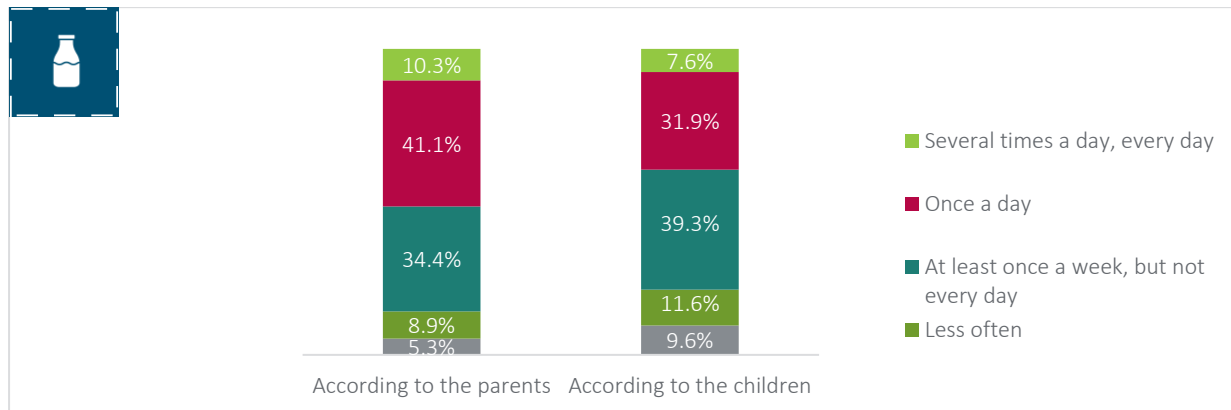
The following figure summarizes the socio-demographic profile of children who most often consume fruits and vegetables at school:



The consumption of milk and milk products in educational establishments is understandably more limited than that of fruit and vegetables. Just over half of the parents are of the opinion that their children are provided with milk and yogurt at least once a day. However, 10 percentage points fewer children share this opinion. Milk products such as cheese and yellow cheese are consumed even less often - most often this happens every day or at least once a week. Such a statement is supported by both parents and their children. It is important to note here that while four out of ten parents assume that their child consumes milk or yogurt every day at school, about 15 percentage points fewer children confirm this opinion. Such a difference in statements between parents and children most likely stems from the fact that the latter (especially the younger ones) often find it difficult to judge what and when exactly they consumed.



Chart18. Milk consumption IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



The planning area, as well as the type of settlement, does not influence whether and how often children consume fresh and yogurt in educational establishments. In practice, this means that the schemes cover the territory of the country evenly, without registering areas where supplies are problematic or more limited. The consumption of milk and yogurt is more typical for children who attend kindergartens than schools or SESC. 83% of those who consume milk and yogurt several times a day and 63% of those who consume them once a day are of preschool age. Such results are understandable, since the mandatory diet of children in kindergarten necessarily includes milk, while in school this is not the case.

Here too, as with the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption in schools, age has an effect on the regular consumption of milk or yogurt in the educational institution. The average age of the most intensive consumers of these milk products is 5.7 years, and the least - 8.5 years.

Within the framework of the qualitative survey, opinions were shared that confirmed the presence of a positive effect of the program on the target group in terms of milk consumption. Milk is not a product that is strongly embedded in the diet of children in Bulgaria, as it is often replaced by yogurt, which is more popular in our country. However, some applicants shared that the school schemes have fulfilled their purpose exactly as planned – through consistency, product quality and proper presentation, the children, part of the scheme, already perceive milk as a useful, tasty and sought-after product.

R: I will answer you like this: in Sofia, 5 years ago, leading directors who appear on TV, said that children do not like milk and they will never consume it. This was the first year when there was a requirement to have at least one delivery of milk per month. It turned out that the children, when there is a proper packaging that is handy for drinking, and persistence, the same these principals, after 3 months, asked for 2 and 3 deliveries. The program has a very positive effect on the formation of children's habits.

R: Absolutely!

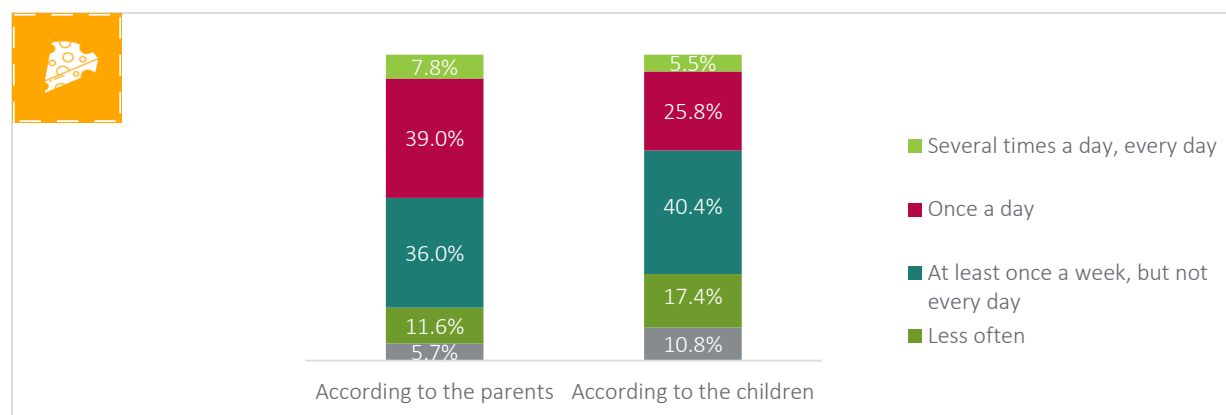
R: It is not by chance that it is said that there is food culture and it is cultivated. Yes, there are many things that children do not consume at home for various reasons, but we, by offering it in kindergartens, little by little, children learn about this varied diet and begin to accept different foods that are good for them. The culture of eating is brought up and the schemes are good. It is just necessary some things to be looked at, to be refined and to identify what is not appropriate.

Applicant, Northwest Region

According to the Monitoring Reports, more than 117 tons of cheese and yellow cheese were distributed within the school year 2020/21. Nearly 4 million portions were distributed to the representatives of the target group, which gives them the last place among the other products under the Scheme in the ranking of the number of food/beverages distributed. Considering this information, the smaller share of those who answered that they consume such products at least once a day at the educational establishment is also understandable. Here too, however, there is a difference between the responses of parents and their children. 31% of children say that they consume cheese and cottage cheese at school at least once a day, while 16 percentage points more parents assume that their child consumes such milk products daily.

Here, the type of school and the age of the child play a significant role in determining the frequency of cheese and yellow cheese consumption in schools. In kindergartens, children consume these milk products more often than in schools, because of the mandatory meals that are provided to them.

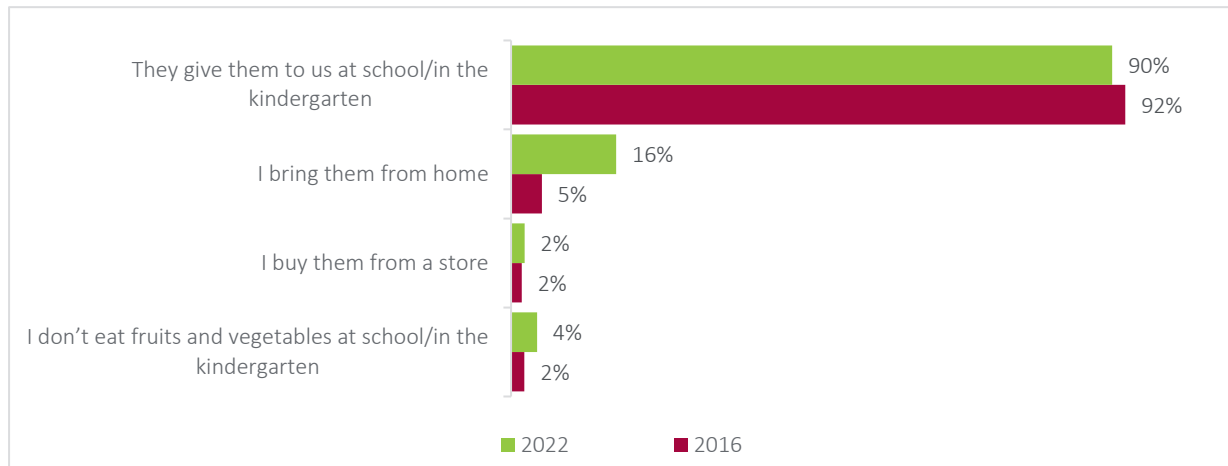
Chart19. Consumption of milk products IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



This year's quantitative survey does not report a change in the percentage distribution of children who receive fruits, vegetables and milk at school (90% in 2022 versus 92% in 2016). It is important to note, however, that 11 percentage points more children compared to 2016 "bring" these products from home. **Such growth is an indicator of a beginning change in eating habits among parents and children.** This process has certainly started among children, since the share also indicates a completed action - the parent packed useful food in the child's backpack, which he then ate, and did not bring it back home. Of all the planning regions, only the Northwest region has a more significant difference than the national average in this regard. In practice, this means that children from Northwest Bulgaria are more likely not to bring fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products from home and consume them at school, unlike their peers in the other regions. Also, it is more common for an urban child to consume a healthy product packed by his parent, compared to children of his age who attend a kindergarten or school in a village. Such differences may stem from the financial status of the household or the lack of culture to pack food for school in these localities because the distances are close.



Chart20. How do you get the fruits, vegetables and milk you eat at school, in kindergarten? [Basis 2022 : 23,158 children and students; 2016: 1,600 educational establishments; multiple choice question]



It is interesting to note that none of the children who bring fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products to school are of school age. This is because it is assumed that in kindergartens food is provided and sufficient, and the child has not developed his habits to the extent that he can take care of his own nutritional needs. If we carry over this share of 16% to the total number of students covered in the survey, we will see that **almost every third student up to the 4th grade (29%) brings from home and consumes fruits, vegetables, milk and/or milk products.** Although lacking comparability with previous results, it can be said that **such a share is encouraging for the successful establishment of healthy eating habits among children at an early age.** Bringing and eating healthy food from home is not dictated by the lack of financial means in households and the inability of the child to buy lunch. On the contrary, families who define their financial situation as worse than others are more likely not to prepare a healthy meal for their child for school. The reverse is also true – the more financially comfortable parents feel, the more likely their child will eat healthy, home-cooked meals at school. Parents over the age of 35 and university graduates also fall into the group of those who send their child to school with healthy food.



29% of students from 1st to 4th grade bring healthy food from home and eat it at school. Most often these are the children of:

- Parents over 35 years of age
- Who feel financially comfortable
- University graduates

However, it would be difficult to determine to what extent the existence of such a culture is due to the implementation of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments. However, the data shows that **parents who find the schemes extremely useful are more likely not to see the need to prepare extra healthy food for their child's school.** This may in effect mean that the Scheme is to some extent given a weight which it

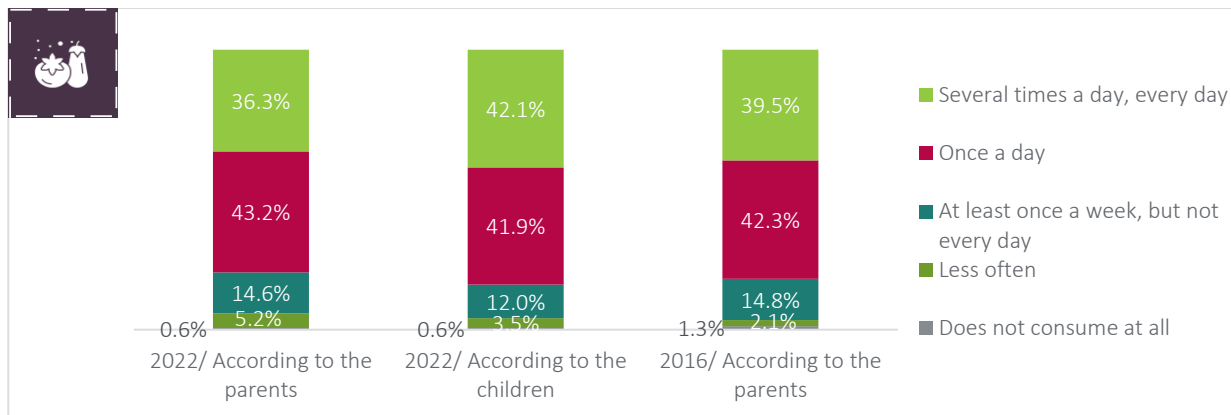


was not intended to carry. It is extremely important to communicate with parents the aims of the schemes and its possibilities. Otherwise, the implementation of the Scheme may be perceived as "half-way" or unsuccessful.

In 2022, the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at home remained almost unchanged compared to 2016. In both surveys, eight out of ten parents said their child consumed these products at least once a day. Within the answer "I consume every day several times", however, a difference of about 8 percentage points was registered between the answers of the parents and those of the children.

! It can be concluded that the pattern of behavior regarding the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption remains unchanged, which is a sign of sustainability. At the same time, the majority of children understand the importance of regular consumption of these products, which in turn shows that healthy eating is present as a concept in the minds of adolescents, part of the Scheme.

Chart21. Consumption of fruits and vegetables AT HOME. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



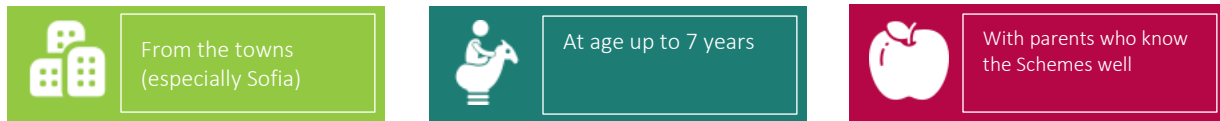
In contrast to the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at school, a medium-strength relationship is registered between this issue and social and demographic factors such as parents' education and ethnicity. The additional statistical analysis shows that children whose parents are less educated and from minorities consume fruits and vegetables at home less often than the rest of their peers. It is important to note here that the financial factor plays a much smaller role in the frequency of this consumption – the data does not report correlation between the self-assessment of the household's financial situation and the frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at home.

This practically means that measures are needed to raise the awareness among these groups about the need to consume sufficient fruits and vegetables at home, as well as about the importance of building healthy habits among adolescents. It is this message that underlies the implementation of the Schemes, which, as mentioned earlier in the text, are defined by some of the marginalized groups as social assistance and, accordingly, the expectations for its implementation differ from what is set as purpose.



There are some differences from the average ones for the country compared to the planning area in which the parents live. In the Northwest planning region, children will consume fruits and vegetables at home less often than their peers in other parts of Bulgaria. On the other hand, in the Southwest region (which includes Sofia), parents more often indicate that their child consumes fruits and vegetables more than once a day. Other differences from the average are observed in relation to the type of settlement (in towns children consume fruits and vegetables more often than their peers in villages) and in relation to the type of educational establishment. It also turns out that preschoolers consume more fruits and vegetables than school-aged children, not only at school, but also at home.

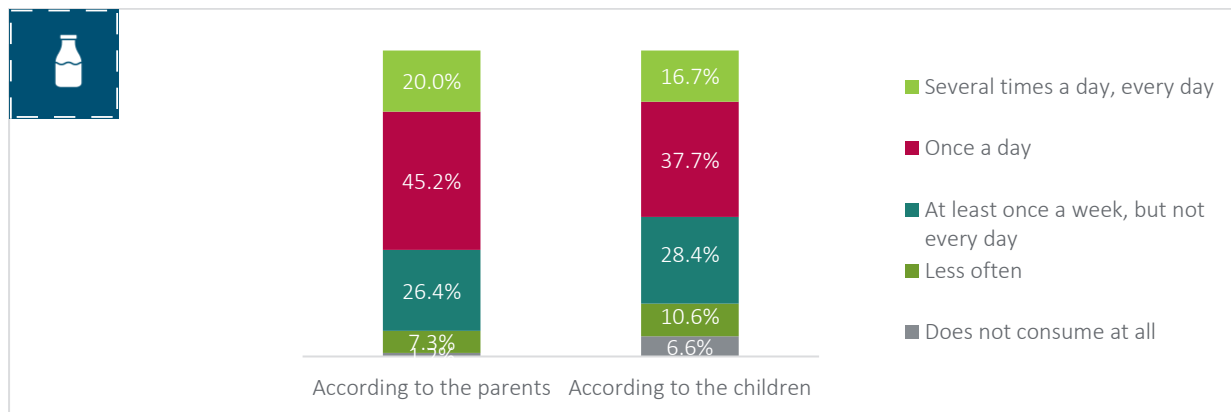
The following figure summarizes the social and demographic profile of children who most often consume fruits and vegetables at home:



Two-thirds of the parents state that their children consume milk or yogurt at home at least once a day. This share is 11 percentage points lower for the children, which can be considered an expected difference, given that the youngest population is less involved in monitoring their diet and daily consumption of different foods. The profile of parents whose children most often or less often consume yogurt or milk is identical to that derived in relation to the consumption of fruits and vegetables. This is an indicator that there is a significant group in the country that follows the recommendations for healthy nutrition of their child, but also that there is misinformation and a lack of culture in this regard.

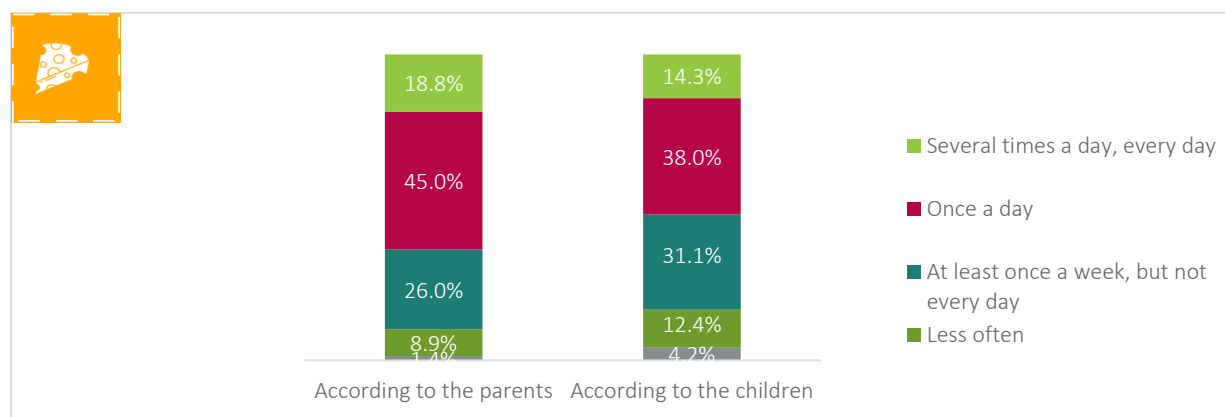
Such a deficit cannot and should not be overcome solely by the implementation of the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments. Undoubtedly, however, its implementation affects the change of similar attitudes among more vulnerable groups as well. A result that can be measured within a longer term.

Chart22. Consumption of milk and yogurt, 2022, AT HOME. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



Milk products such as cheese and yellow cheese are consumed by children just as often as milk. Such results are explained also by the strong correlation reported between questions related to home consumption of milk and milk products. Further statistical analysis shows that over 25% of the responses to these two questions overlap, i.e. they are answered in the same way. This practically means that milk and milk products “go hand in hand” in terms of their consumption. Therefore, also here, the social and demographic profile of the parents who provide the daily ration of milk products overlaps with that of people who give their children milk or yogurt at least once a day.

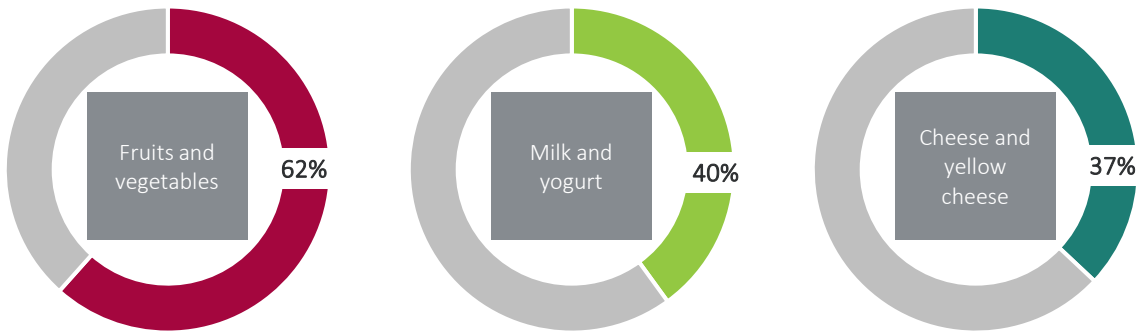
Chart23. Consumption of milk products (cheese and yellow cheese) AT HOME. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



It is interesting to derive information about the share of children, representatives of the target group, who consume fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products on a daily basis, both at school and at home. Almost 2/3, or in absolute values these are approximately 264,000 children from 1st group in the kindergarten to 4th grade in the schools, consume fruits and vegetables at least once a day, both at home and in the educational establishment. Such high results are encouraging for building and maintaining healthy habits among adolescents. The share of children who consume milk (40%) and milk products (37%) every day, at home and in the educational establishment, is comparatively smaller. In absolute values, these are respectively about 172,000 and 159,000 representatives of the target group. The consumption is relatively the same in the individual planning regions, as only the Southeast region shows values above the average for the country, mainly because of the capital and the bigger opportunities it offers. More kindergarten children eat healthy compared to students from 1st to 4th grade, probably because of the special diet that preschool children have in the educational establishment.



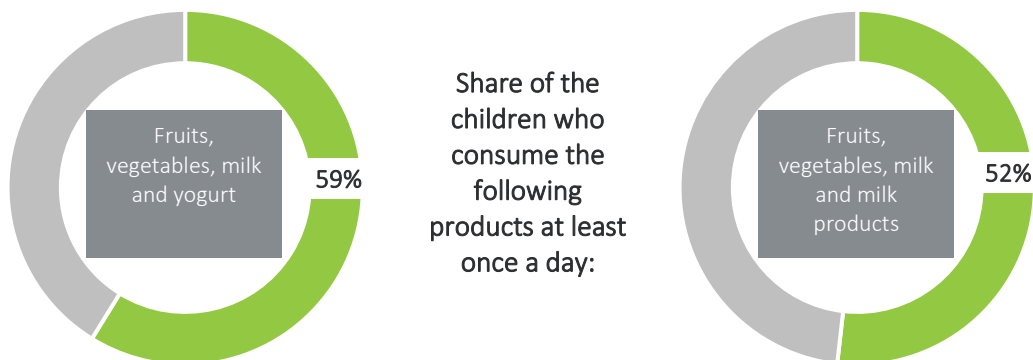
Chart24. Share of children consuming fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products at least once a day both at school and at home. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



! Further processing shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between that whether children consume at least once a day fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products, both at home and at school, and the level of awareness and approval of the Scheme. The higher the level of awareness of the Scheme, the more likely the child is to consume the healthy product on a daily basis, at both places. The same applies to the level of approval of the Scheme – the more useful it is considered, the more likely the child is to consume fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products on a daily basis. This practically means that **the Scheme has a positive impact on the frequency of consumption of healthy products, as well as on the commitment of parents, teachers and educators to build healthy habits among adolescents.**

A little more than half of the children included in the Scheme eat fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products at least once a day, both at school and at home. In absolute values, these are approximately 223,000 children covered by the Scheme who consume the healthy products recommended in the Strategy every day.

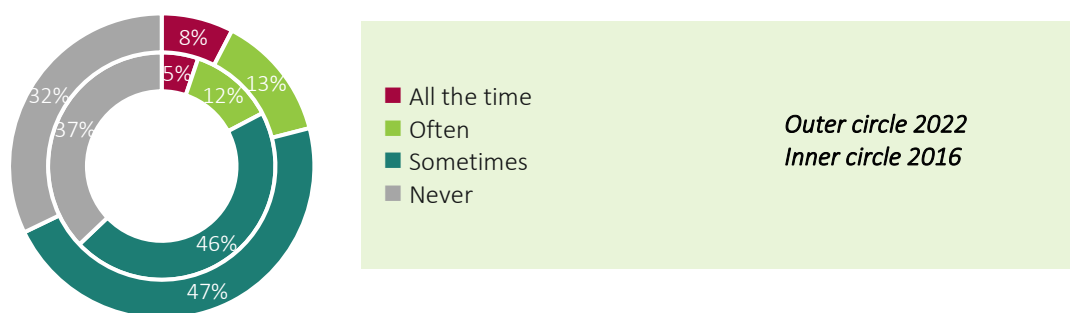
Chart25. Share of children consuming healthy products at least once a day, both at home and at school (total). [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



The results of the answers to the question asked to the children can be defined as concerning: “When you are at home, how often do you feel like eating fruits and vegetables, but there are

none?”. In 2022, just over 1/5 say that this happens all the time or often. A share that was seven percentage points lower in 2016 (or 17%). There is also a difference in the percentage distribution of the children who claim that fruits and vegetables are available at home all the time – this share decreases from 37% in 2016 to 32% in 2022. However, it should be taken into account that this year's survey was conducted during a period of high inflation, high fuel prices and economic uncertainty caused by external factors such as the war in Ukraine. It is very likely that these results show a snapshot of the household state, which is not necessarily the case in general. In addition to this conditionality is the analysis of the social and demographic characteristics of the children who answered “all the time” or “often”. The additional statistical processing shows that children from more vulnerable groups most often give these answers, such as: households from villages, low-educated and of ethnic minority.

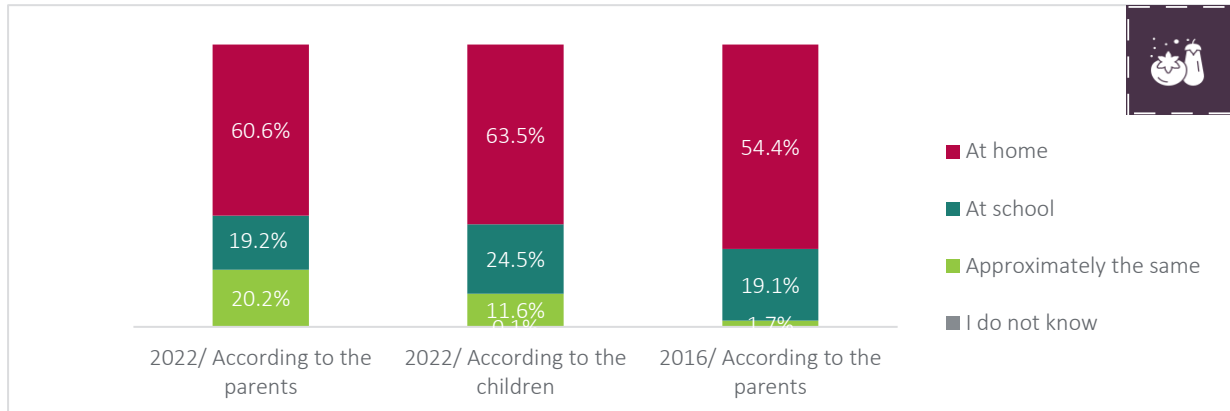
Chart26. When you are at home, how often do you feel like eating fruits and vegetables, but there are none? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



Both parents and their children are definite that the latter consume more fruits and vegetables at home than at the educational institution. Such results are, on one hand, logical, since adolescents spend more time at home. Compared to the 2016 survey, this share increased by a little more than 6 percentage points, while the percentage distribution of those consuming fruits and vegetables mainly at school remained the same (19%). It is noteworthy that compared to 2016, almost 20 times more parents are of the opinion that their children consume the same amount of fruits and vegetables both in the educational establishment and at home. These peculiarities in 2022 suggest that within these 6 years the consumption of fruits and vegetables at home has increased. Here also the social and demographic characteristics of the household largely determine the answers to this question. The more vulnerable groups: from villages, with parents with lower education, from ethnic groups and those who define their financial situation as worse than of others, most often indicate that the child consumes more fruits and vegetables at school than at home.



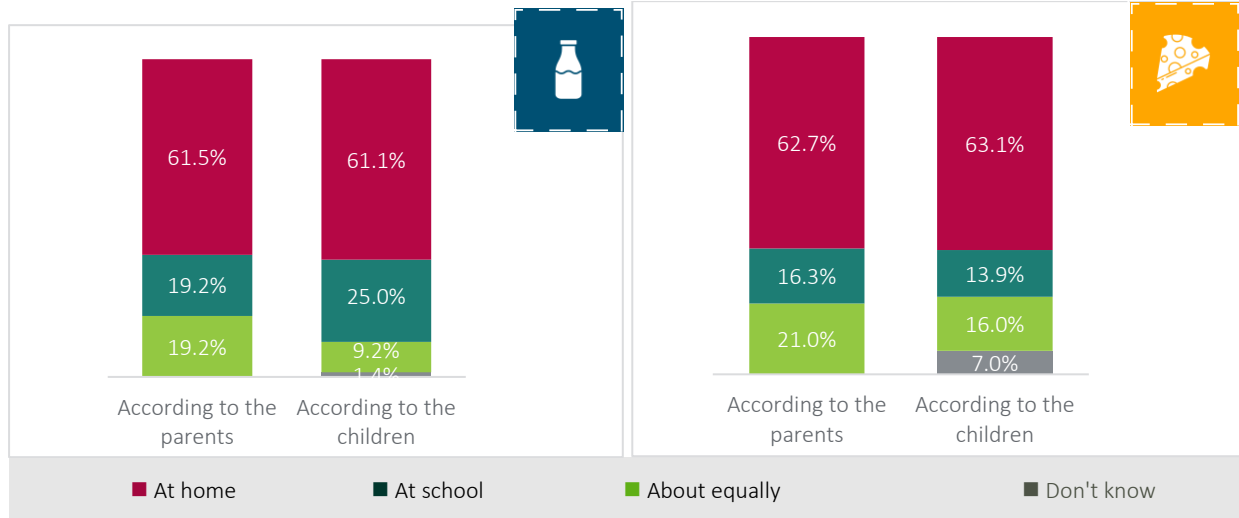
Chart27. Where are more fruits and vegetables consumed? [Basis 2022: 23,158 parents and children/students; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



The same applies to the consumption of milk and milk products – nearly 2/3 of the parents and the same number of the children firmly state that these products are consumed more at home than at school. There is a strong correlation with over 50 percent overlapping responses between the three options considered: fruits and vegetables, milk and yogurt, cheese and yellow cheese. This practically means that it is not typical for any of the products to be consumed mainly at home, and another – mainly at school. This, on one hand, shows an “equal attitude” to the two categories of healthy foods included in the Strategy and that the reason for their limited consumption is mostly the same (for example, lack of finances).

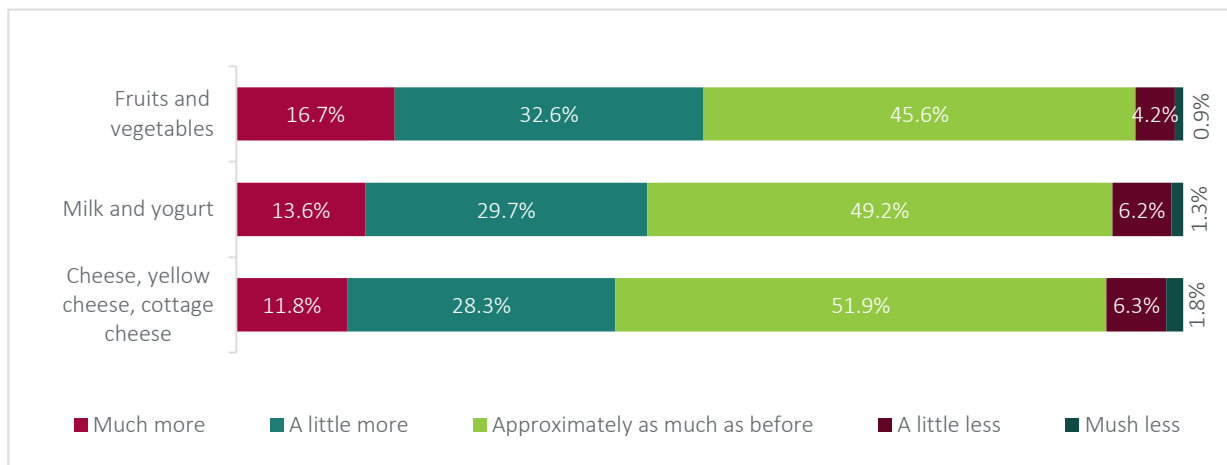


Chart28. Where more milk and milk products are consumed? [Basis 2022: 23,158 parents and children/students; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



About half of the parents think that their children are consuming more or less the same amount of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products at school compared to last year. Such an opinion may originate from the fact that the period of one year is too short to give a definite assessment of a tangible difference in the eating behavior of children. However, there is a change, and the trend is the consumption of these products to increase.

Chart29. Change in children’s consumption volume compared to the last one year according to their parents [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



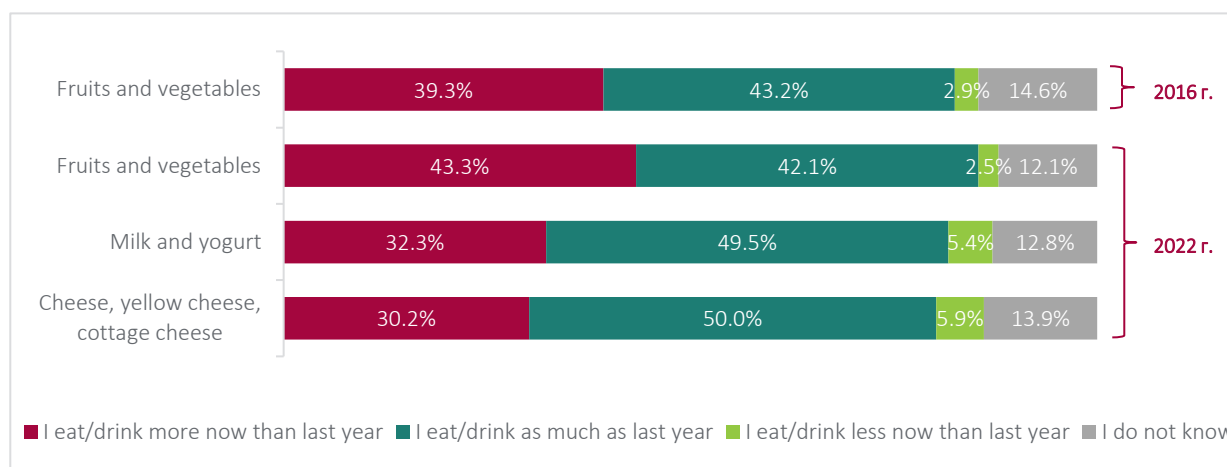
It is noteworthy that among the more vulnerable groups, the answer “much more or a little more” is more common when asked “More or less, compared to a year ago, does your child now consume the following products?”. Young parents under the age of 30, living in villages, with secondary and primary education, as well as from ethnic groups, more often share that, in their opinion, their child consumes more often and more fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products, compared to a year ago. Let’s not forget that these groups are distinguished by a lower consumption of healthy products than the others. This practically means that there are external factors that have contributed to this positive change. Subsequent surveys would show whether



these results are sustainable and whether there is a positive trend. It is also important to note that a correlation is found between the assessment whether the child consumes more fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products and the extent to which the parents are aware of and approve the Scheme. Those respondents who declare a positive change most often indicate that they are very well aware of the Scheme and describe it as “extremely useful”.

At the same time, the children covered by the Scheme are not so convinced that in the last one year the consumption of milk and milk products has changed drastically. A little less than 1/3 are those who declare a change in a positive direction, and another 43% confirm the same regarding fruits and vegetables. At social and demographic level, there are no drastic differences from the average for the country. In practice, this means that the children equally have difficulty judging, given that the interviewees are not yet at an age where they can use their abstract thinking.

Chart30. Change in children’s consumption volume compared to the last one year according to the children [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments. Note: Data for 2016 refer only to the “fruits and vegetables” option.]



The qualitative survey confirms the results recorded in the quantitative survey among children and parents. For a large part of the parents and children, school schemes are social in nature and have a significant impact on supporting these groups and providing them with healthy, high-quality food.

R: In such a way that there are children who cannot afford to buy milk in such packaging.
 R: Or as per BDS. Or organic.
 R: Yes. You know that the disadvantaged parent will buy the cheapest? I am no exception. So, it absolutely contributes.



Stakeholders, Northwest Region

• • •

“In fact, the consumption of fruits and milk products is really going up. These are more than 400 thousand children who participate in these schemes. The parents of many of them cannot afford milk products as per BDS.”

Applicant, Northwest Region

• • •

“Of course! They contribute a lot. We have many children of Roma origin who cannot afford to eat that on a daily basis, and 40-50% do it only in the kindergarten.”

Educational Institution, Southeast Region

Overall, the stakeholders under the schemes rate their implementation as excellent. According to their observations, the increase in fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products is tangible, considering their contacts in personal and professional terms. Despite the problems encountered by the applicants and mentioned earlier in the text, everyone appreciates it highly, welcomes the initiative and recommends that the schemes continue to be implemented exactly because their effect is visible.

“I think that the program is successful as it is. Indeed, the consumption of milk products, fruits and vegetables is increasing among children. Increasing the target group that the products reach would be helpful so that even more children can benefit from it.”

Educational institution, Northeast Region

• • •

R: Consumption is definitely increasing, as well as the healthy lifestyle.

R: I can give feedback from a milk producer. The owner said: “Since you have been working with us on the school schemes, our sales in our town have gone up 3-4 times”. In-store sales, I mean.

Applicant, South Central Region

They also often mention cases where the positive effect of the scheme on children is also noticeable in the behavior of the target group. Cases are repeatedly cited where children and students purposefully “seek” or “wait” for school scheme supplies at the time they are used to receive them.

“Since they look forward to it!” Now we also give honey, and you know that honey is consumed much more in Europe. Here also the children got used to tasting real honey, because there are no compromises here. We are talking about all suppliers that supply honey. This is a great Bulgarian product and really many of the children had not ever tried it. Since they had not tried it, they do not want to, but now we succeeded there too”

Educational institution, Southeast Region



• • •
“I will share from the point of view of the kindergarten. I am a working teacher in a group. Every morning since the start of this program, the children have been waiting with pleasure to be served a carrot, cucumber or milk, in the small packages, which is very practical. They build habits in this way and really wait for it. The elder ones ask: “Won't there be a snack?” It is very appropriate. Let it not stop.”

Educational institution, Northwest Region

In this regard, it is also important to mention the recommendations of stakeholders regarding the scope of the target group. They are mainly aimed at its expansion – the inclusion of nursery groups in kindergartens and students from 5th to 7th grade in primary schools. The participants in the discussions are mainly driven by the consideration that in certain situations a small number of children/students in the educational establishments find themselves isolated in the distribution of products under the scheme, which may affect them negatively. Stakeholders only mention cases where the majority of the target groups representatives receive fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products, and another, smaller part does not.

“We are a primary school and it would be a pleasure for us to have all the students included because times are difficult and in addition, we have students of Roma origin and we have families whose two young children are students from 1st to 4th grade, and the other two are from 5th to 7th grade. Two of them get a banana for breakfast and the other two do not. This is my proposal – from the next school year, if there are finances, students from 5th to 7th grade to be included in these school schemes.”

Educational institution, South Central Region

• • •
“I said from the beginning that it is good to cover the children from 1st to 7th grade. I support my colleague’s opinion. In the kindergarten in Smilyan, in the same way, there is fruit and milk for one of the groups, but not for the other. Organizationally, it is difficult for cooks and administrators, because they have to give one thing for one group, for the other – another. The work of the establishments that work under these schemes will be facilitated.”

Educational establishment, South Central Region

• • •
“After all, the target group shall be expanded and it shall be started in this direction, where the percentage of increase is not high, nursery groups in kindergartens. They are not second-rate children. We must not again create conditions for circumventing the requirements, because even at the moment the headmistresses who have such nursery groups cannot deprive these children. They are not orphans! When they see that the others are receiving, without being permitted by the ordinance, they set aside small quantities from the other children, so that the other children may try as well. Because of this, we think that it is possible to start step by step with the nursery groups, and this does not require a budget. Then to increase it in the following grades and to reach the group that is allowed for assistance, which is up to the 7th grade by regulation.”

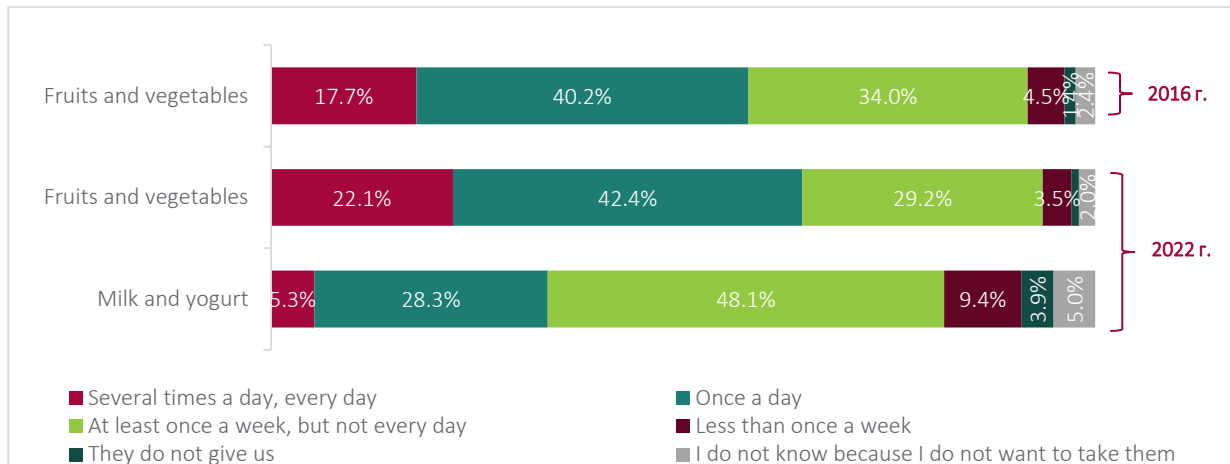
Educational institution, Northwest Region

When asked how often they are given products under the school schemes, the majority of the representatives of the target group rarely say that this happens contrary to the Ordinance. Only



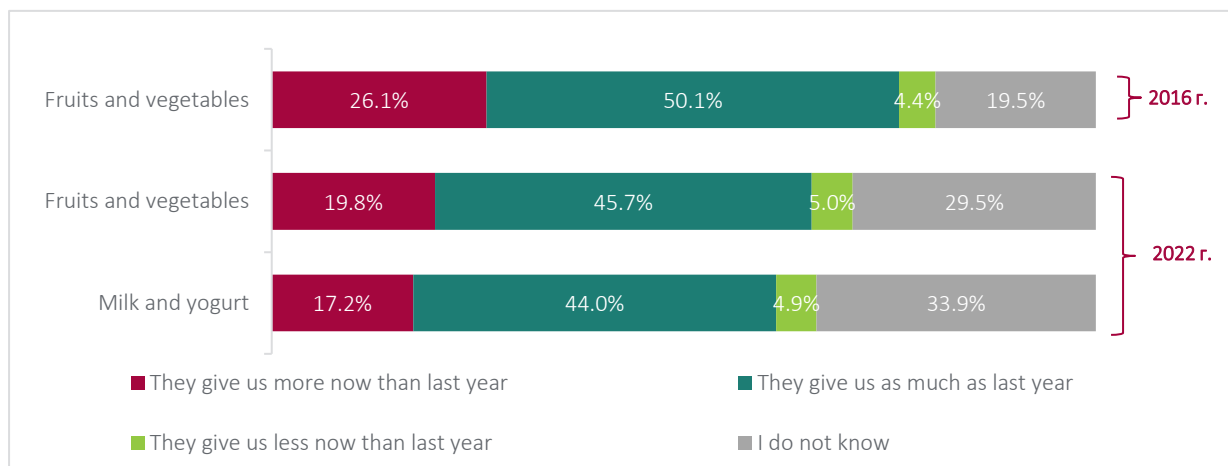
4% of the children state that they receive fruits and vegetables less than twice a week, and another 13% are categorical that they do not receive the necessary ration per week. Within the 13%, children/parents from the Northwest planning region and students are more common, and the villages, minority groups and kindergartens are the least common.

Chart31. Frequency of distribution of the products under the school schemes. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments. Note: Data for 2016 refers only to “fruits and vegetables” option]



Only 5% of the children say that, compared to last year, the educational establishment gives them less fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products. Such results should be assessed positively, as they show that the educational establishments strictly fulfill their obligations according to the Ordinance.

Chart32. Do you think that compared to last year, your school/kindergarten gives you now more fruits and vegetables / more milk? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students; 2016: 1600 educational establishments. Note: Data for 2016 refer only to the “fruits and vegetables” option.]

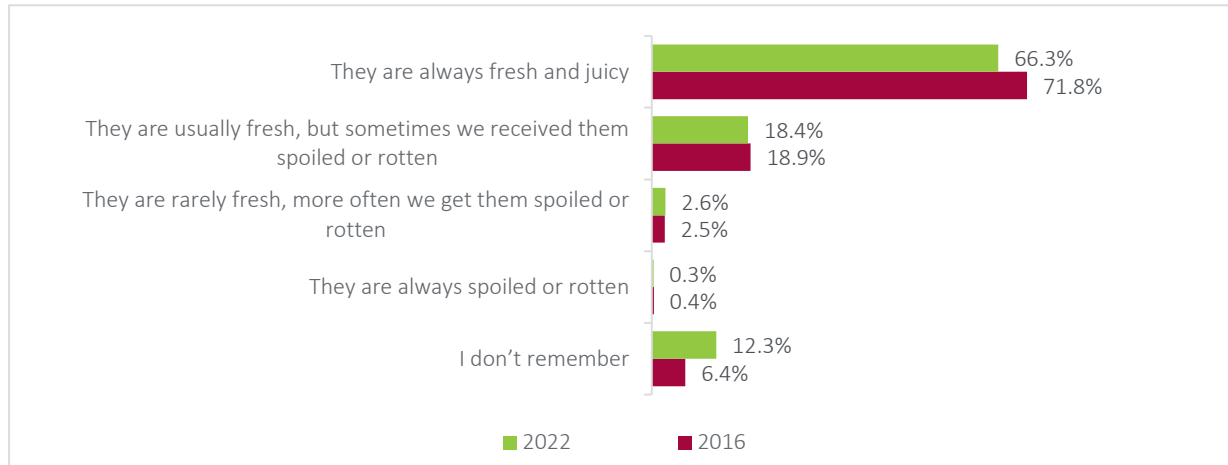


“They [fruits and vegetables] are always fresh and juicy” state 2/3 of the children, part of the Scheme. This share is slightly lower (by 6 percentage points) than the one recorded in 2016, but only because the target group finds it difficult to remember the condition of the received products. In 2022 as well, nearly 1/5 share that the fruits and vegetables are not always fresh. Such statement is more often shared by children from villages and schools. It is important to



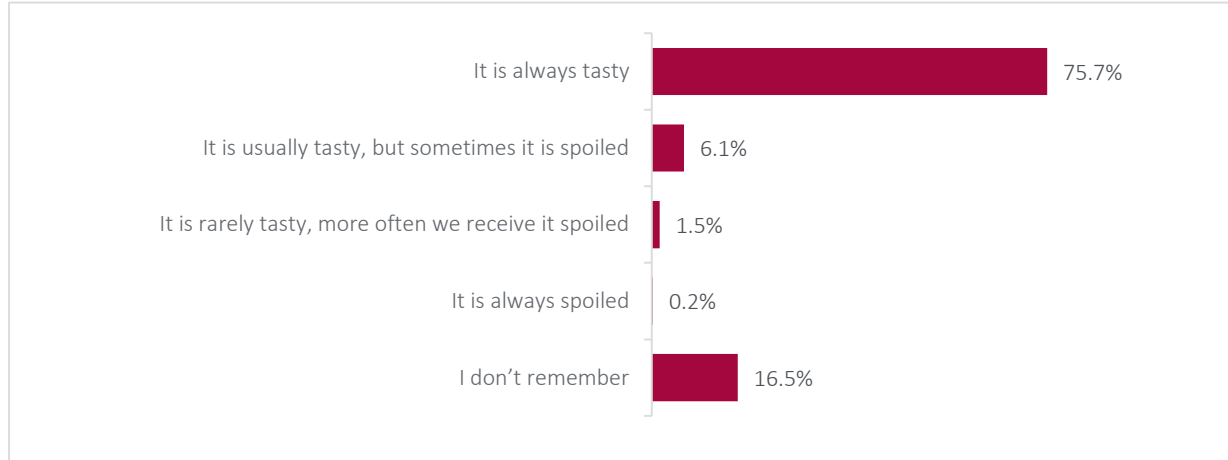
note, however, that only 3% of all respondents have serious objections to the quality of fruits and vegetables. A share that remains unchanged compared to 2016.

Chart33. What would you say about the fruits and vegetables that are given to you at school, in kindergarten? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



Nearly 76% of the children are adamant that the milk they receive at school is of good quality, and only 8% are of the opposite opinion. Students are most often dissatisfied with the taste of milk.

Chart34. And what would you say about the milk you receive at school, in kindergarten? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students]

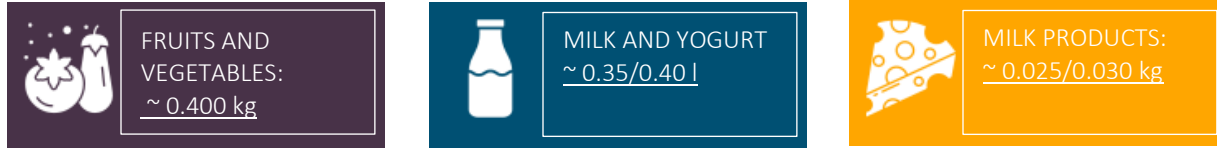


6.2.1.2 SHARE OF THE CHILDREN FULFILLING THE DAILY RECOMMENDED INTAKE OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES, MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

According to the National Strategy for the implementation of a scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in kindergartens, schools and centers for special educational support in the Republic of Bulgaria until the end of the 2022/2023 school year, the recommended intake of the products under the Scheme is as follows:



Figure3. Recommended daily intake of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products for children of age between 3 and 11.



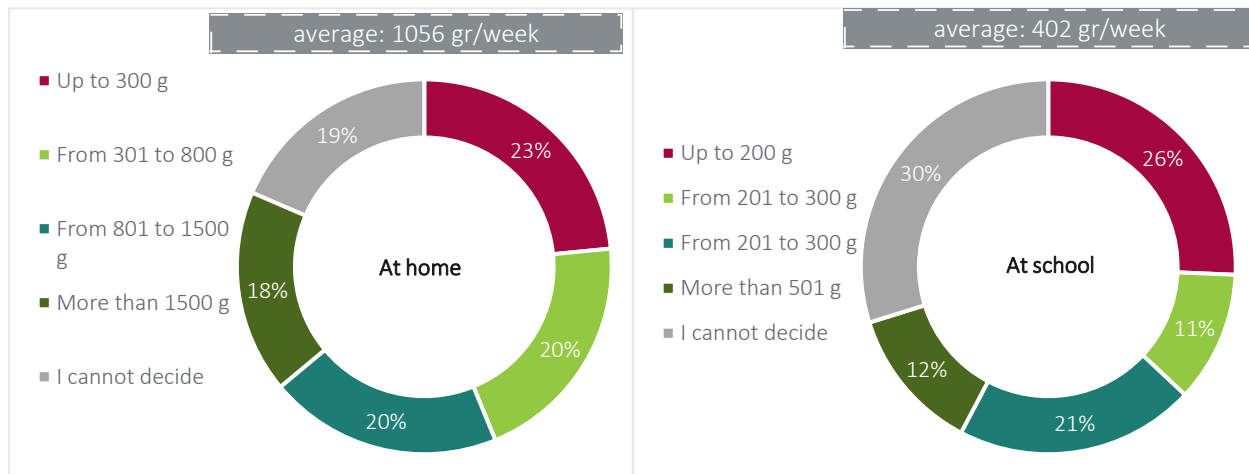
! This part of the report presents whether and to what extent the representatives of the target group fulfill the recommendations for daily consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products described in the Strategy. As part of the current survey, parents were asked to indicate the approximate quantity of the products consumed by their child, both at school and in the educational institution, part of the Scheme. This approach is quick and efficient, but often leads to inaccurate answers, omissions and errors by the respondents – parents find it difficult to estimate the weight of the product, often do not include in the accounts products that are consumed in the form of a cooked meal, products are omitted, etc. From a research point of view, the most reliable method of collecting such type of data is through the so-called “field diary” in which the participants record the required information daily over a period of time.

In this sense, the results presented in the next few graphs should be interpreted tentatively.

Fruits and vegetables:

Children consume almost twice as much fruits and vegetables at home than at school. This is practically logical, given that adolescents spend more time at home than in kindergarten or school. The considerable share of children who consume less than 300 g of fruits and vegetables is impressive – respectively 23% are those who consume less than the critical minimum per week at home and 37% – in the educational institution.

Chart35. Quantity of consumed fruits and vegetables, both at school and at home, within one week. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



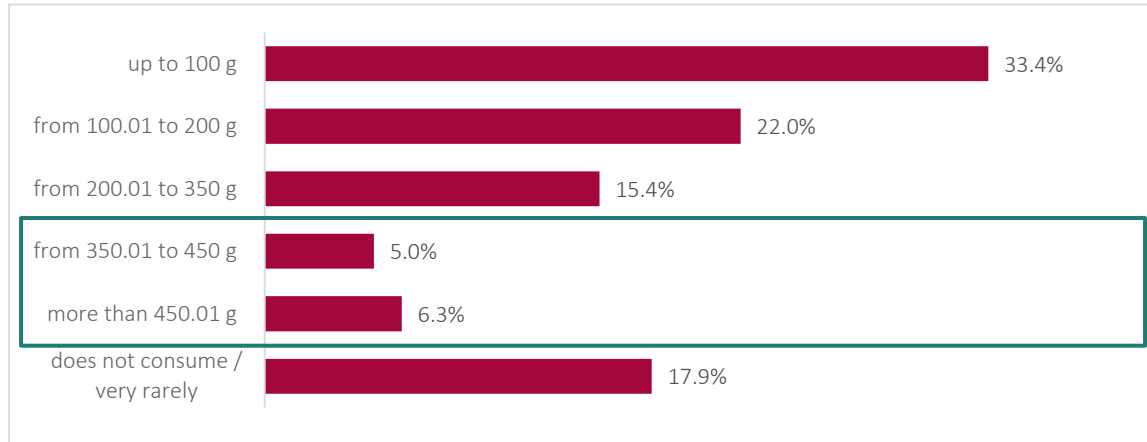
However, in order to answer the question “What is the share of children who fulfill the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables”, additional statistical processing was



performed to represent the **daily total consumption of fruits and vegetables**. It is necessary to remind that, according to the Strategy, the recommended daily intake of these products is 0.40 kilograms for children in kindergarten and students from 1st to 4th grade.

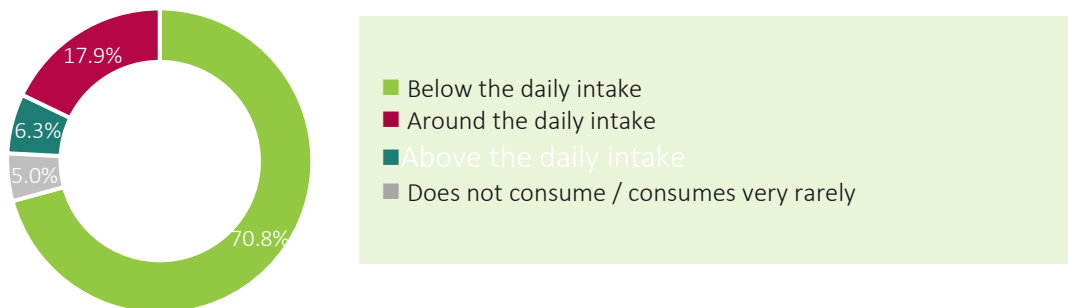
Only 11% of the children, target group of the Scheme, fulfill the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables. Such a share can be defined as **disturbingly low**, but the considerations mentioned at the beginning of this item should not be neglected.

Chart36. Quantity of consumed fruits and vegetables, both at school and at home per day. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



Seven out of ten children, representatives of the target group, consume fruits and vegetables below the recommended daily intake. Just under 1/5 of all parents indicate amounts of fruits and vegetables consumed by their children that are around the recommended daily intake, and after additional calculations it turns out that another 11% consume more than the recommended ration.

Chart37. Fruits and vegetables consumption per day by children. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



Even if we assume that the daily rations presented by the parents are greatly underestimated, it is important to mention several dependencies:

- **At educational establishment level** – children are more likely to consume more fruits and vegetables when they are of school age than when they are younger. Such a difference may result from the fact that older children are able to provide themselves with additional food that is available at home than younger children who depend mainly on their parents and caregivers. This practically may mean that the children are given access



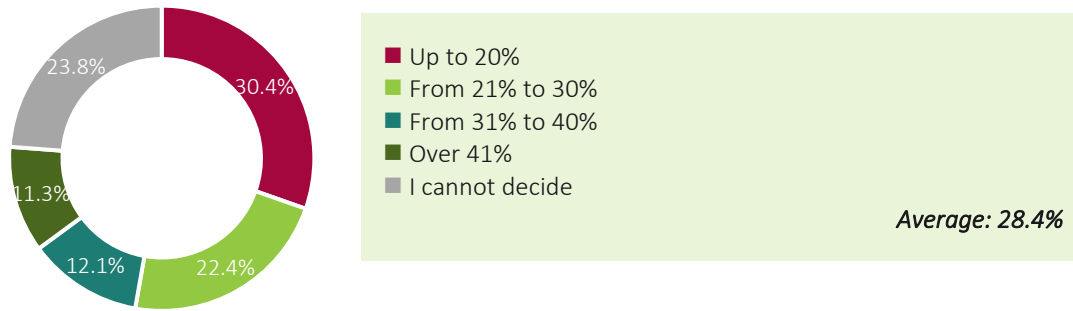
to fruits and vegetables (e.g. at home) which they take advantage of – a sign of availability of healthy habits.

- **According to the gender of the child** – girls more often than boys eat more limited quantities and do not cover the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables.
- **According to the type of settlement** – in cities, it is more common for children up to IV grade to consume around or above the recommended daily intake, than in villages. It is also typical for small settlements that there are more often children who do not consume fruits and vegetables at all or very rarely.
- **According to the education level of the parents** – with the increase of level of education of the parents, also the daily quantity of fruits and vegetables that their child consumes increases.
- **By ethnicity** – children from minority groups consume the least amount of fruits and vegetables per day. A number of factors lead to the more limited and unhealthy diet of vulnerable groups, which also leads to inability to build and reinforce healthy eating habits among children from minority groups. Consumption of fruits and vegetables below the recommended daily intake is more common among children of Bulgarian Mohammedans or Bulgarian Turks, and the consumption of these products extremely rarely is more typical for children of Roma origin. However, in the group of children who take around and above the recommended daily intake, those who identify themselves as Bulgarians predominate. Ethnic inequality is clearly distinguishable in this case. Multi-layered, in-depth policies involving a wide range of stakeholders are needed to influence and change these differences.
- **According to the financial situation of the household** – of course, the regular intake of healthy food is closely related not only to the education and attitudes of the parents, but also to their financial situation. The more financially secured the parents of the children covered by the Scheme are, the more likely it is that they provide enough fruits and vegetables for their family every day.
- **According to the evaluation whether their child eats healthily** – parents whose children consume fruits and vegetables very rarely, which also defines them as a critical group, are aware that their child does not eat healthily. This is a sign that these parents are not providing enough fruits and vegetables to their child, not because of carelessness or ignorance, but for other reasons (e.g. financial). This practically means that in the event of a change in the social and economic status of the family, the child's eating habits could change to healthier ones. However, parents whose child's intake is below or around the recommended minimum are not so decisive. They would often consider that their child is eating healthily. Such attitudes can be a problem in the future, as they show a lack of knowledge and interest by the parent, and hence – less building in the child of healthy eating habits according to the recommendations of the specialists.

Just over half of the parents say that fruits and vegetables make up 30% of their child's total daily diet. Children whose parents have low education, from minorities, in unenviable financial condition and those who state that their children do not eat particularly healthy consume below the average for the country (28.4%).



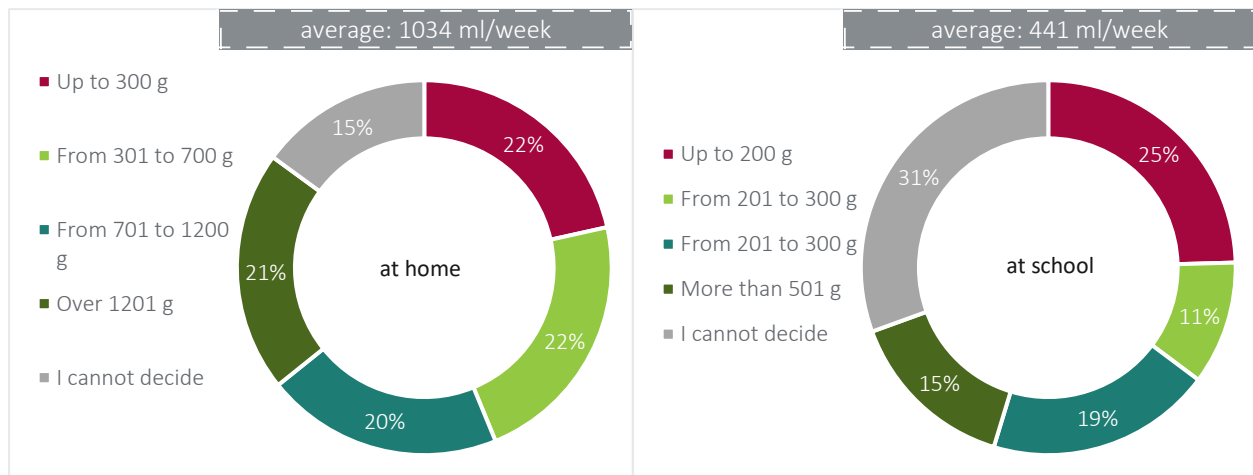
Chart38. Percentage distribution of different products from the general daily diet. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



Milk and yogurt

Children consume almost twice as much milk and yogurt at home than at the educational institution. These products are consumed in the largest quantities by the youngest representatives of the target group, because of the mandatory meals in kindergartens. The established dependence – the older the child becomes, the less yogurt or milk consumes, leads us to the conclusion that it is advisable to offer older children milk in an attractive form (for example, fruit yogurts).

Chart39. Amount of milk and yogurt consumed, both at school and at home within one week. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]

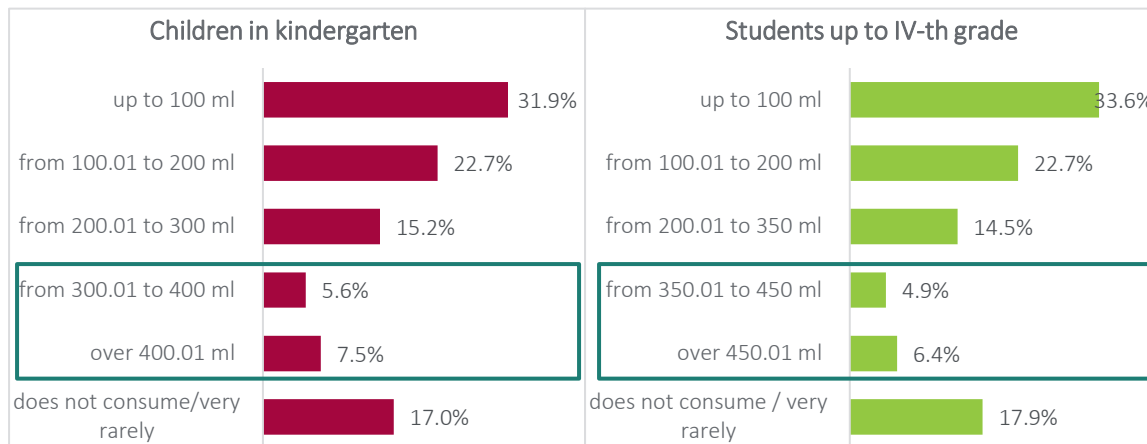


But in order to answer the question “What is the share of children who fulfill the recommended daily intake of milk and yogurt”, additional statistical processing was performed to present the **daily total consumption of milk and yogurt**. It is necessary to remind that, according to the Strategy, the recommended daily intake of these products is 0.35 liters for children in kindergarten and 0.40 liters for students from 1st to 4th grade.

Less than 13% of the children in kindergartens and 11% of the students up to the 4th grade receive the recommended daily intake of milk and yogurt. Here also, as with fruits and vegetables, we can point out that these shares are worryingly low, but there is a real possibility that the results are greatly lowered.

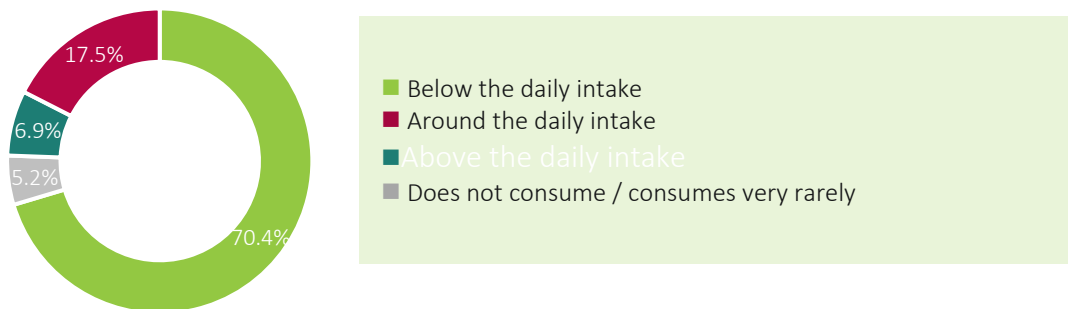


Chart40. Amount of consumed milk and yogurt, both at school and at home per day. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



Seven out of ten children, representatives of the target group, consume milk and yogurt below the recommended daily intake. A little under 1/5 of all parents indicate amounts of milk consumed by their children that are around the recommended daily intake, and after additional calculations it turns out that another 7% consume more than the recommended ration.

Chart41. Fruits and vegetables consumption per day by children. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



Even if we assume that the daily rations presented by the parents are greatly underestimated, it is important to mention several dependencies:

- **At education establishment level** – children are more likely to consume more milk when they are in kindergarten than when they are older. The difference in consumption between these two groups is significant and may come from the prevailing opinion among students that milk is designated for the younger ones. Such a social construction by the students is false and leads to consumption of quantities of milk far below the recommended intake. To avoid this “stigma”, milk can be presented in a more attractive form, for example as fruit yogurts or milk can be combined with other foods.
- **According to the gender of the child** – girls more often than boys eat more limited quantities and do not cover the recommended daily intake of milk and yogurt.
- **According to the type of settlement** – children who do not consume or very rarely consume milk or yogurt are more common in the villages.
- **According to parent’s education level** – the same like with fruit and vegetable intake, the parent’s education level affects whether their child will consume enough milk and yogurt.

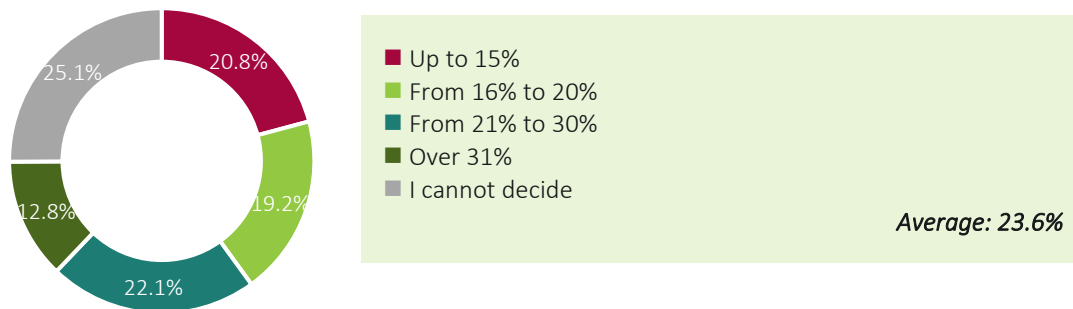


As the parent’s education level increases, so does the daily amount of milk their child takes.

- **According to ethnicity** – 1/3 of the parents who identify themselves as Roma say that their child does not consume milk or yogurt at all or consumes them extremely rarely. Such results are concerning since the children from this minority group generally eat unhealthy foods, and as mentioned earlier in the text, fruits and vegetables are also lacking in their daily food consumption.
- **According to the financial situation of the household** – the family must feel good financially to be able to provide enough milk for their children. Lack of cash is directly related to the insufficient milk consumption, but it is not necessarily the main factor in unhealthy eating. The social environment, the personal example that parents set, upbringing and others are the basis of building healthy habits among children.
- **According to the evaluation whether their child eats healthily** – parents whose children consume milk very rarely, which also defines them as a critical group, are aware that their child does not eat healthily. Such results are a sign that a change in parents’ behavior with regard to providing healthy food to their children is possible if some of the external social and economic factors are mitigated.

Six out of ten parents say that milk and yogurt make up less than 30% of their child’s total daily intake.

Chart42. Percentage distribution of different products from the general daily diet. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



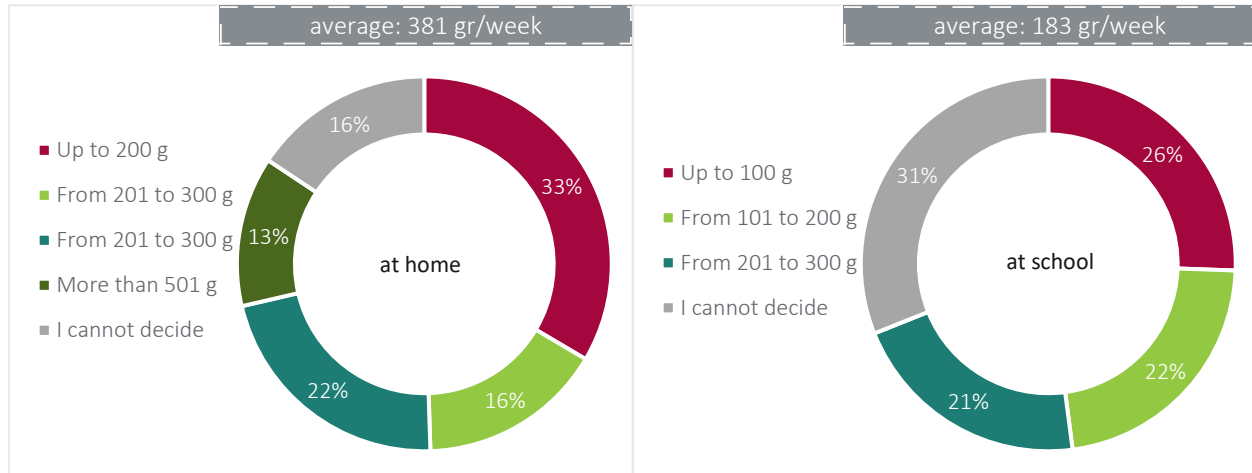
Milk products (cheese and yellow cheese)

Milk products such as cheese and yellow cheese are consumed rarely, but at the expense of this in amounts that cover the recommendations of the experts for dairy products accepted per day. Four out of ten children, the target group of the Scheme, eat more than 100 g of cheese, yellow cheese or cottage cheese at school, while at home the consumption is even more intense. The presence of an abundance of milk products in the diet of children is a positive fact, but it can also



hide dangers for the health of adolescents if the dairy products that parents buy are of low quality.

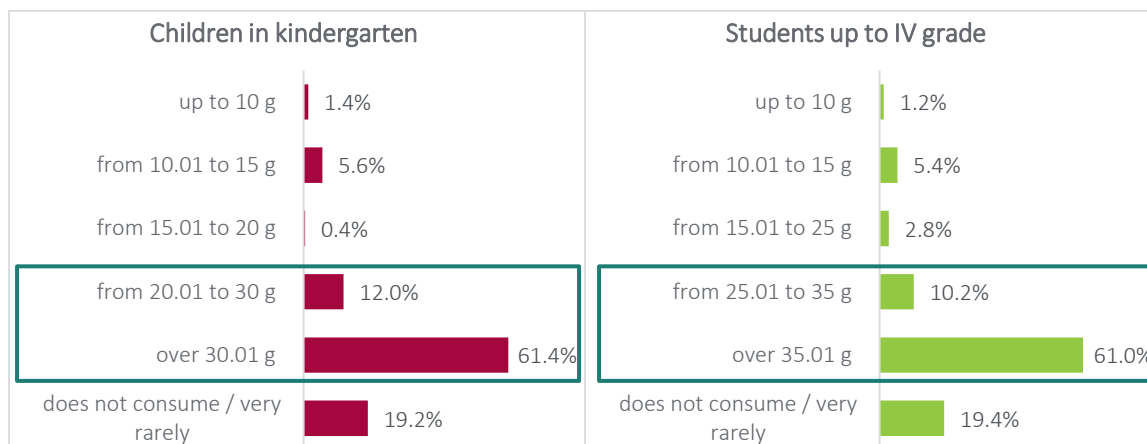
Chart43. Amount of milk products (cheese and yellow cheese) consumed, both at school and at home within one week. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



But in order to answer the question “What is the share of children who fulfill the recommended daily intake of milk products”, additional statistical processing was performed to represent **the daily total consumption of milk products (cheese and yellow cheese)**. It is necessary to remind that, according to the Strategy, the recommended daily intake of these products is 0.025 kilograms for children in kindergarten and 0.03 kilograms for students from 1st to 4th grade.

Over 70% of the children consume the amount recommended by the health experts. Only in relation to these products we register a high share of the representatives of the target group who fulfill the prescriptions for daily consumption of milk products.

Chart44. Amount of milk products consumed (cheese and yellow cheese), both at school and at home per day. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]

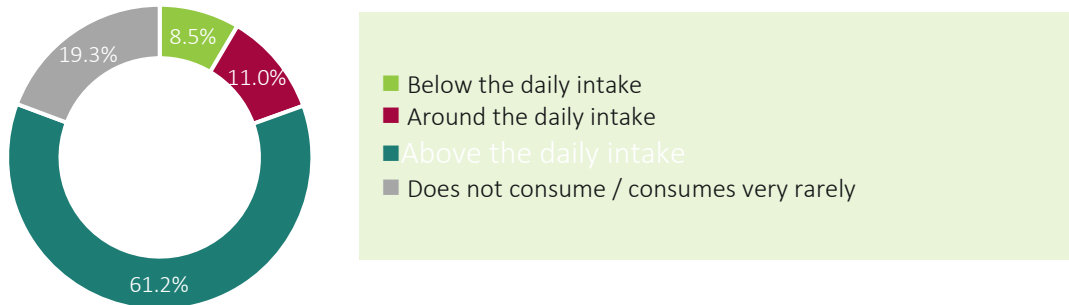


Despite the high number of children consuming cheese and yellow cheese per day according to the recommendations of health experts, the results of the study show that **one of five children do not consume at all or consume very rarely milk products**. In practice, this means that there



are prerequisites for distinguishing two groups of children covered by the Scheme, one of which is highly vulnerable.

Chart45. Children's consumption of milk products (cheese and yellow cheese) per day. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



In order to distinguish these two groups, it is important to mention several dependencies regarding their social and economic characteristics:

- **At educational establishment level** – no significant difference from the national average is observed in the consumption of cheese, yellow cheese or cottage cheese at educational establishment level. Such results show that these products are perceived equally well by children of different ages, and parents, in turn, do not limit their access depending on whether their child attends kindergarten or school.
- **According to the gender of the child** – A similar conclusion can be formulated based on the child gender. More abundant or more limited consumption of milk products is not particularly strongly influenced by the gender of the child.
- **According to the type of settlement** – However, this is not the case with the type of settlement in which children live and their consumption of milk products. Children, part of the Scheme, who live in the villages are more strongly restricted in their consumption than their peers in the cities.
- **According to the level of education of the parent** – The level of education of the parent in most cases directly reflects on the general social and economic status of the household. Here too, children whose parents have primary or lower education have less access to cheese and yellow cheese.
- **By ethnicity** – there is a strong correlation between the ethnic group of the interviewed parent and whether their child consumes milk products below, around or above the recommended daily intake. Also with regard to this group of products, children from ethnic minorities have very limited access to cheese and yellow cheese. Mainly Bulgarian-Mohammedan, Turkish or Roma children consume below the daily ration, while children whose families are of Roma origin do not consume at all or consume it very rarely.
- **According to the financial situation of the household** – The results of the survey show that the household does not have to be in an excellent financial situation to be able to provide the necessary amounts of milk products to their child. In other words, families living on average incomes can afford sufficient quantities of cheese and yellow cheese. On the other hand, however, those families who define their household's financial situation as very poor are strongly hindered from providing the necessary amounts of milk products

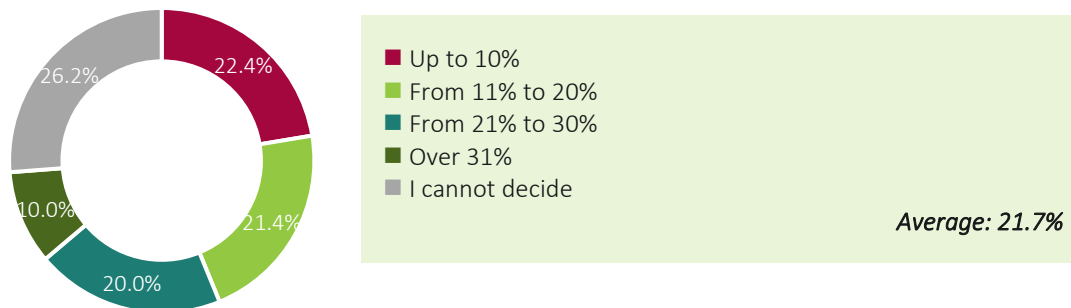


for their family. Such results confirm once again the existence of two very different groups among the children, part of the Scheme, one of them being much more disadvantaged than the other in terms of taking the necessary amounts of healthy products per day.

- **According to the assessment whether their child eats healthy** – parents whose children consume milk products below the average amount per day are aware that they eat rather unhealthily. This is an indicator that the intake of cheese, yellow cheese or cottage cheese can increase if some important and constraining external factors (such as household financial situation) are mitigated.

Six out of ten parents say that milk products such as cheese and yellow cheese make up less than 30% of their child’s total daily diet.

Chart46. Percentage distribution of different products from the general daily diet. [Basis 2022: 23 158 parents]



! As a last and very important conclusion within this item, it should be pointed out that the consumption of healthy products in the educational establishment has strong influence on the total amount of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products taken by the children. For **those representatives of the target group, who are more vulnerable in social and financial terms, the presence of a Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments proves to be of great importance for their healthy diet.** Without the existence of this scheme, a large number of these children would not take healthy products at all or very rarely. Although this shifts the focus of the Scheme to a social one, its contribution to ensuring healthier lives for vulnerable and marginalized groups should not be overlooked. It should also be noted that the results of the implementation of the Scheme will be visible in the long term as well. Although for some families it has a social burden, after time results can be seen in terms of the change in the healthy habits of the children of these groups.



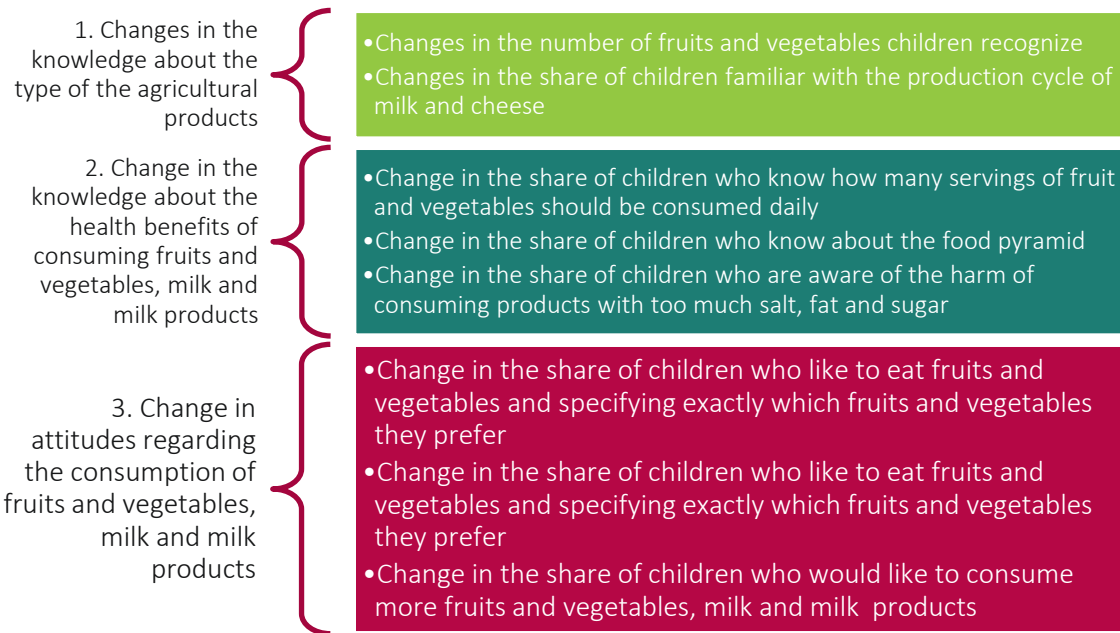
But the existence and implementation of the Scheme also has a strong impact on children whose families cannot provide them with the necessary amounts of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products. The analysis of the data shows that if the school schemes did not exist, the children would go further away from meeting the requirements for minimum consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products per day.

Again, it should be reminded that the study records intakes below the minimum per day of fruits, vegetables and milk, possibly due to misjudged rations by the parent. The trends established by the study show that the Scheme is achieving its objectives and the long-term results are yet to be identified.

6.2.2 Question No. 2

To what extent has the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments for the period 2017/2018-2021/2022 school year contributed to the acquisition of healthy eating habits among children?

The answer to this question goes through the presentation of the results of a certain group of questions that concern the indicators presented in the next diagram. Additional questions, part of the survey are included in the analysis for complementing the overall picture.

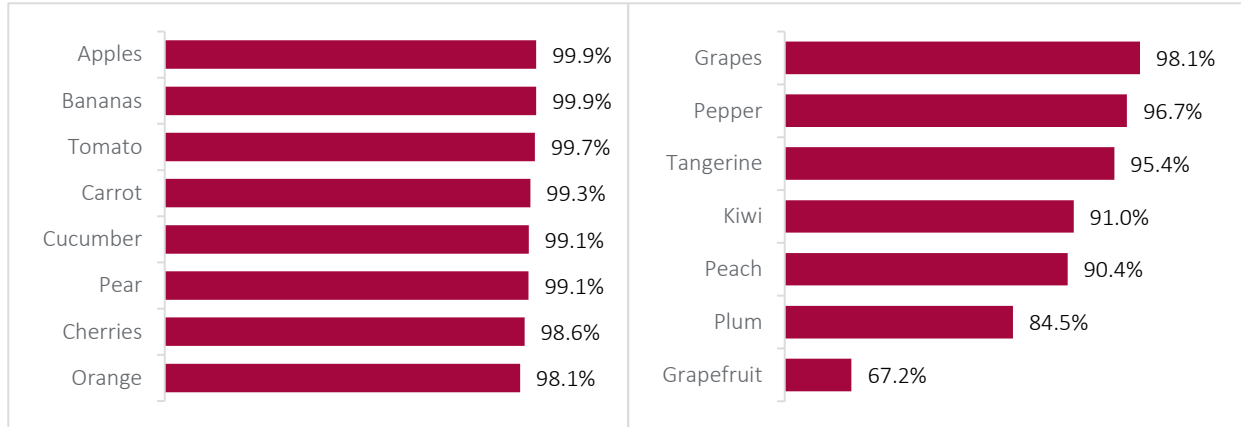


6.2.2.1 CHANGES IN THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE TYPE OF THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

Almost 100 percent is the recognition of 11 out of a total of 15 shown fruits and vegetables. Such results allow us to conclude that **fruits and vegetables are an integral part of children’s daily life from the earliest age**. Only grapefruits turn out to be more exotic than the others, and three out of ten children struggle to name the fruit correctly when shown a picture of it. However it is

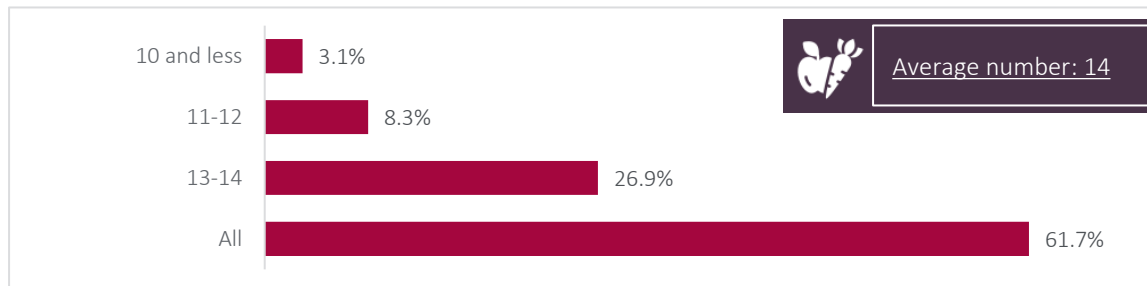
important to clarify here, that kindergarten children tend more not to recognize the southern fruit, since it is most likely rarely present in their menu due to its specific taste.

Chart47. Recognition of fruits and vegetables, share of correct answers. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



On average, 14 out of 15 fruits and vegetables are recognized by the children, covered by the Scheme. Quite logically, a strong correlation is registered between the child’s age and the number of products he/she could name – with age increase, the number of fruits and vegetables that the child recognizes correctly also increases. The youngest representatives of the target group (3-4-year-olds) name an average of 13 products, from 5 to 8-year-olds - 14 fruits and vegetables, and children over 9 years old have no difficulty naming all the products that were shown to them. It is also important to note that most often children indicate the names of all 15 fruits and vegetables (62% of children correctly know the names of these products). This practically means that children are introduced to basic fruits and vegetables from an early age. Such results suggest the existence of a culture and attitude towards these products.

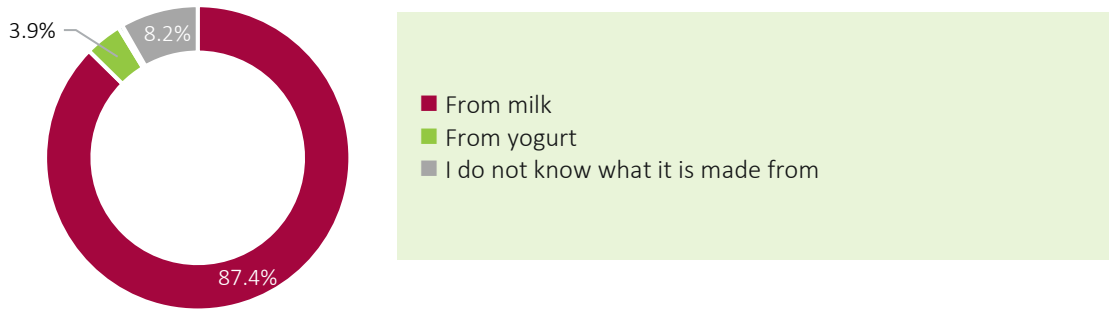
Chart48. Number of recognized fruits and vegetables. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



“Cheese is made from milk”, answered correctly nearly 90% of the children, part of the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments. Logically, students are more familiar with the process than kindergarten children. No difference is observed in the knowledge of the target group at planning region level, which indicates that children learn about the cheese production cycle to the same extent throughout the country.



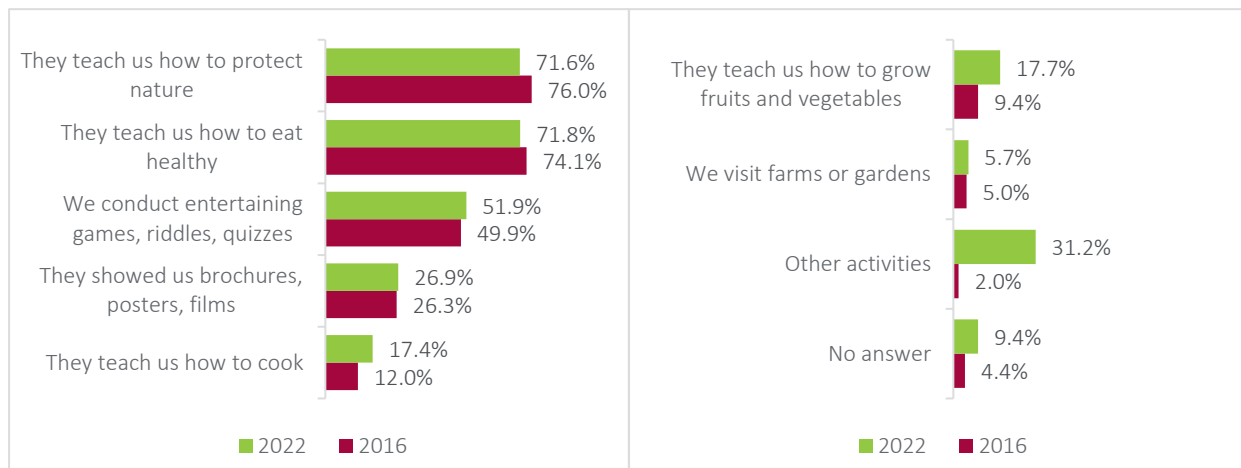
Chart49. Familiarity with the cheese production cycle (question: What is cheese made from?). [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



6.2.2.2 CHANGE IN THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF CONSUMING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

The children, part of the Scheme, have practiced 3 different activities oriented towards healthy eating and agriculture on the average. Most often, they are related to gaining knowledge about how to protect nature (72%), how to eat healthy (72%), and they are a part of practical activities in the form of games, riddles and quizzes (52%). It is noteworthy that, compared to the 2016 survey, the intensity with which the educational activities related to the topic were involved, hardly changed. Some differences are found out with regard to the practical activities and in particular with cooking (increase of 5 percentage points) and how fruits and vegetables are grown (increase of 8 percentage points). In 2022, a large share is also occupied by “other activities”, which are not part of their pre-presented list. Such results suggest the increasing involvement of children in educational activities related to healthy eating. It would be advisable, however, that such activities are more strongly linked in the curriculum, and that children are given more opportunities to familiarize themselves with the various processes.

Chart50. Which of the following have you done at school/in the kindergarten? [Multiple choice question. Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]

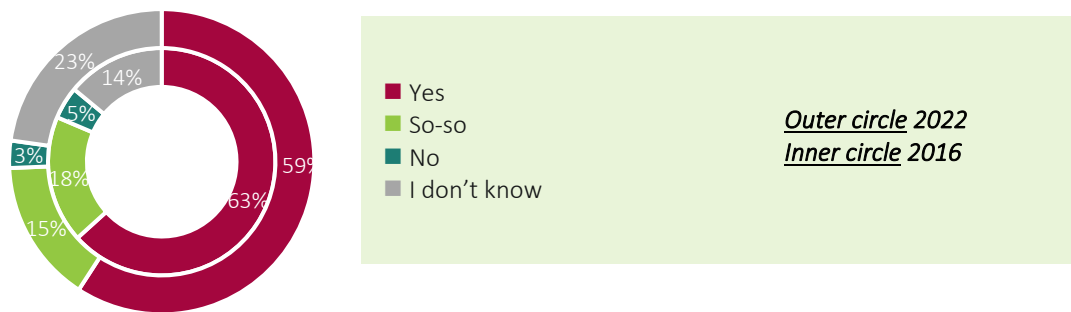


Also in 2022, six out of ten children who are part of the Scheme explicitly say that they find it interesting to visit farms or gardens. In social and economic aspect, the only differences from the national average are established in terms of ethnicity and financial status of the household. Only



children of Roma origin and those whose parents define their family budget as lower than of the others, are more likely to show less interest in visiting farms than their peers. This practically means that there is a good potential for the implementation of such educational measures among almost all representatives of the target group, and the benefits of such a visit should be communicated to the more vulnerable groups. A good incentive would be to communicate to parents that such a visit is free.

Chart51. Is it interesting to visit farms or gardens to show you what care fruits and vegetables need? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



The situation with the question “Are you interested in learning and knowing how to grow fruits and vegetables by yourself”? is similar. Interest in 2022 is similar to that of 2016, with 75% of children indicating a definite answer. In terms of social and demographic characteristics, here also as regarding visiting farms and gardens, children from different backgrounds and ages equally declare that such a topic is interesting to them. Only children from the Roma minority and from more financially limited families are more apathetic about how they can grow their own fruits and vegetables.



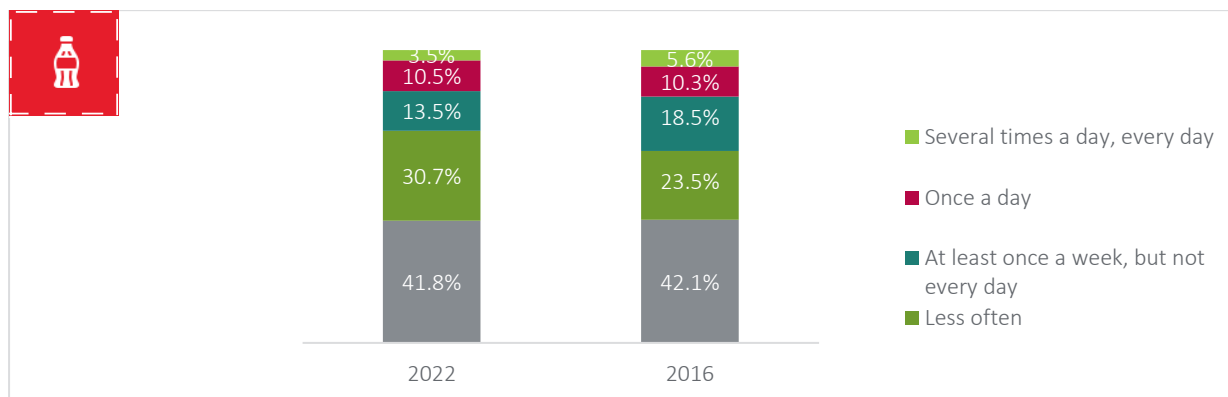
Chart52. Are you interested in learning and knowing how to grow your own fruits and vegetables? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



! The Monitoring reports and the results from the qualitative study show that visits to farms or gardens are rarely carried out. It is recommended to allocate more funds for educational measures within the schemes, as well as to communicate through different channels topics related to healthy nutrition, environmental protection, the process of growing the products under the Scheme and others. The results from the quantitative study, in turn, show that a sustainable interest in participating in such activities is registered among the children. Furthermore, the most interested are those children whose parents approve the implementation of the Scheme, which is a prerequisite for increasing the share of those who are positive towards it.

Compared to 2016, the consumption of carbonated drinks by children has not decreased - six out of ten representatives of the target group consume such products. However, a difference in the frequency with which children drink unhealthy drinks is established. Over the past 6 years, about seven percentage points more children report consuming carbonated drinks less often than once a week, reaching 31% in 2022.

Chart53. Consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks at home. Carbonated drinks. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]

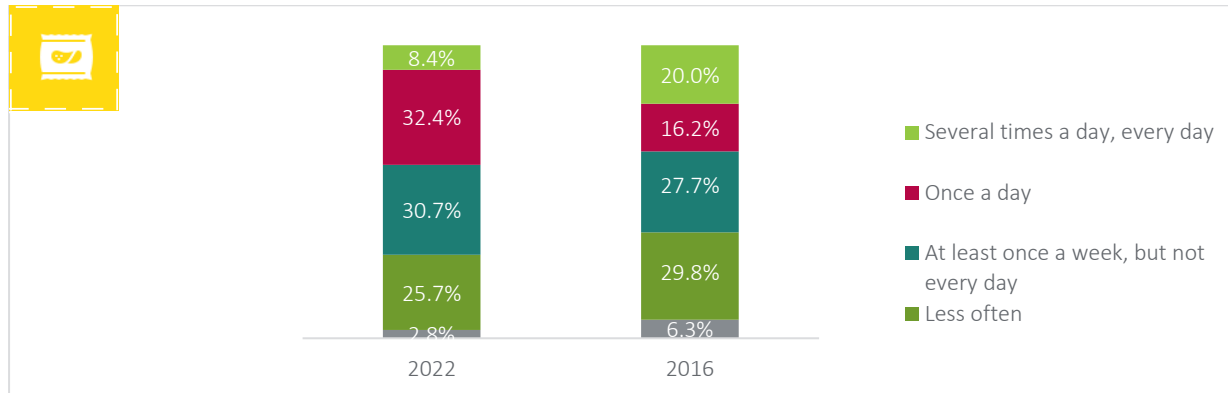


However, the results with regard to the consumption of unhealthy foods such as chips, snacks, chocolate and waffles, compared to 2016, are more dynamic. In 2022, the extremely frequent consumption of such foods decreases by just over 11 percentage points. However, at the expense of this, their intake at least once a day has doubled, with the current study registering shares of 32% (in 2016, this share was 16%). Such results show that it is difficult to eradicate



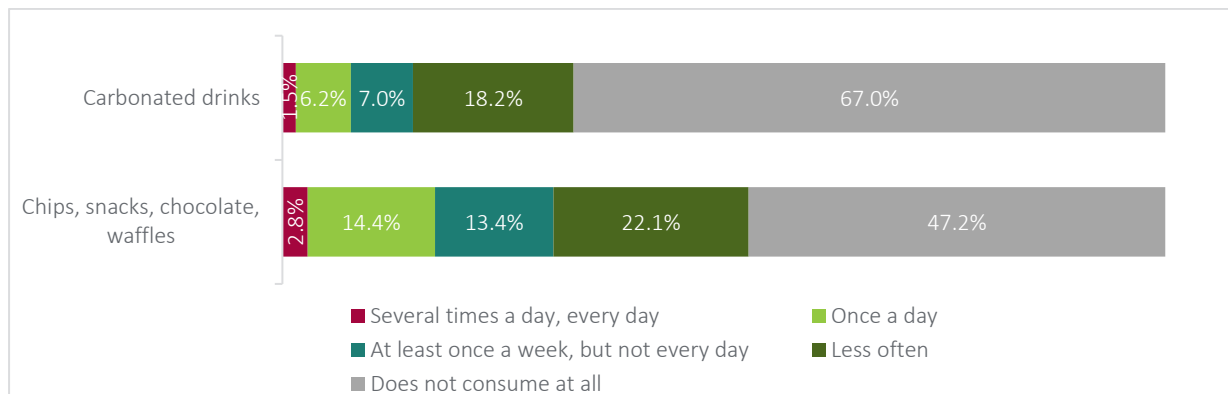
unhealthy foods from the everyday life of the children, target group of the Scheme, but their frequency can be controlled and reduced.

Chart54. Consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks at home. Chips, snacks, chocolate and waffles [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



The intake of unhealthy foods and drinks at school is significantly more limited, compared to the frequency of consumption at home. And if at home four out of ten children, representatives of the target group, consume unhealthy foods such as chips and waffles at least once a day, in the educational establishments this share decreases twice. Carbonated drinks also prove unpopular at school, where only 14% of students buy such products at least once a week. Such results show that the consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks in the educational establishments is limited, but still exists. The access to such foods and drinks makes it difficult to build healthy habits in children.

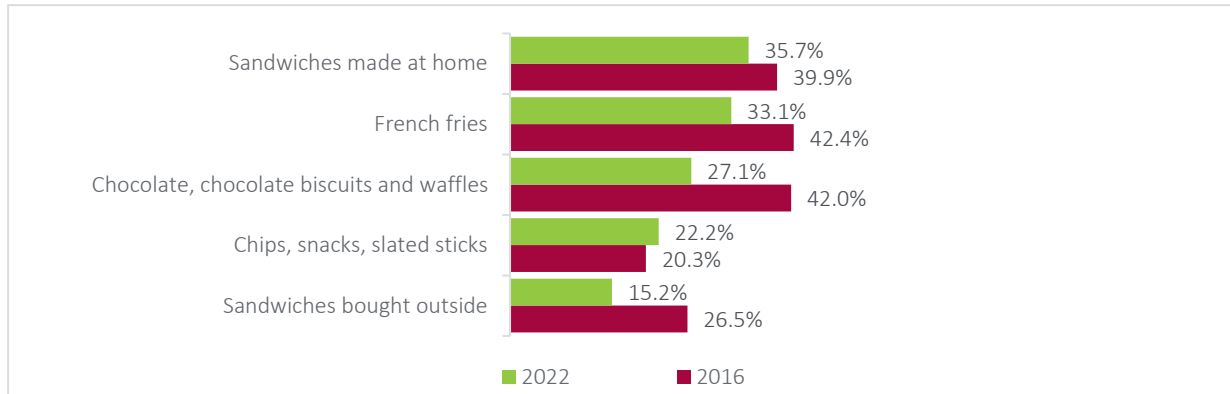
Chart55. Consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks at school. [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



Fewer and fewer children covered by the Scheme are willing to consume more unhealthy foods. With the exception of “chips, snacks and salty sticks”, where the difference from 2016 is less than two percentage points, all other food types are less popular. The most drastic difference is in relation to chocolate products and sandwiches bought outside, where those who expressed a desire to consume more of them are 15 and 11 percentage points less, respectively.

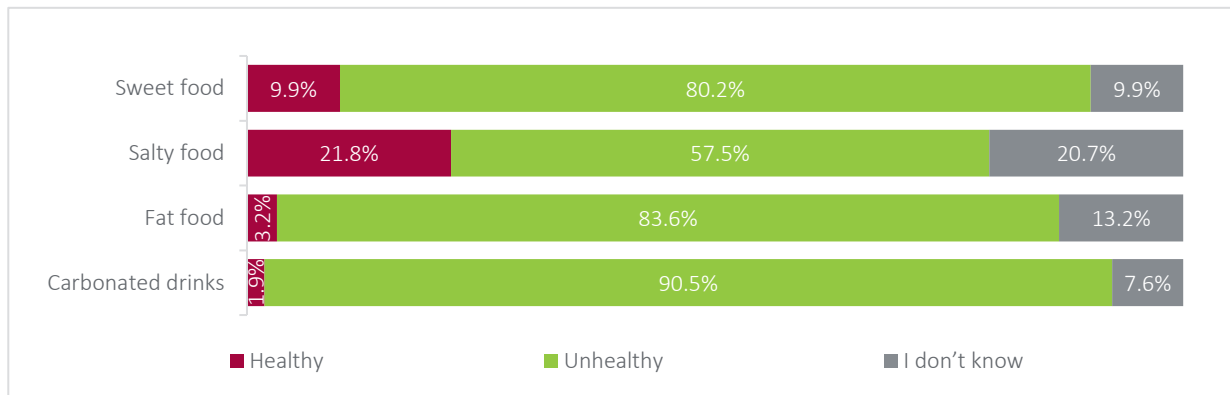


Chart56. Share of children who answered that they would like to eat more of the following types of food: [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



The general opinion among children is that sweet foods, fatty foods and carbonated drinks are unhealthy – between 80 and 90% of the representatives of the target group correctly indicate this answer. However, a smaller share of children (58%) are aware of the harmful effects of consuming salty foods.

Chart57. Is the following healthy or unhealthy in your opinion...: [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



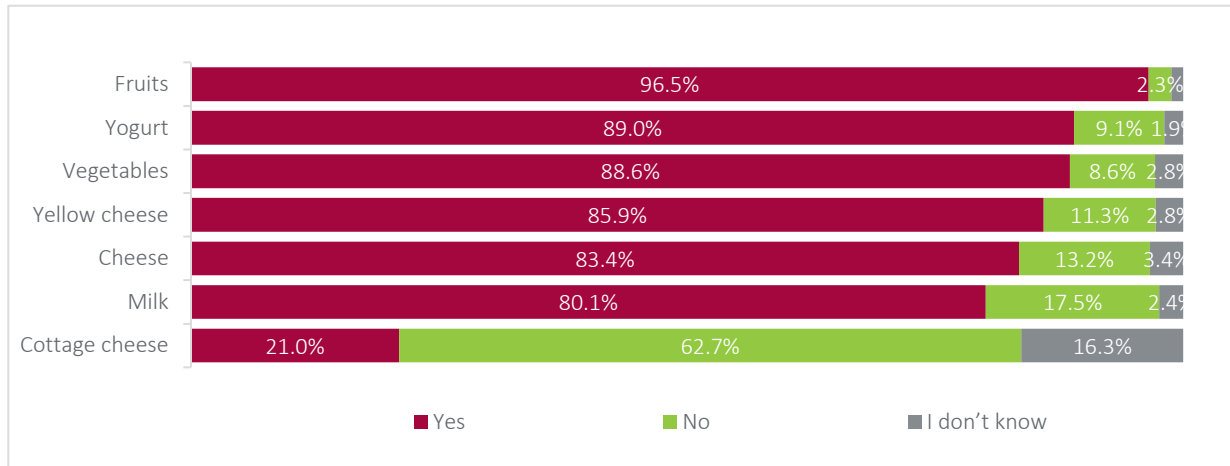
6.2.2.3 CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDES REGARDING THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES, MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

Children and students, part of the school schemes, not only recognize the fruits and vegetables provided to them in the educational establishments, but also share their sincere satisfaction with their consumption. Fruits, vegetables and yogurt are especially favorite for children and students up to 4th grade. Cottage cheese can be defined as the only product from the list that children would accept with not particularly great willingness. Similar results create the prerequisite for



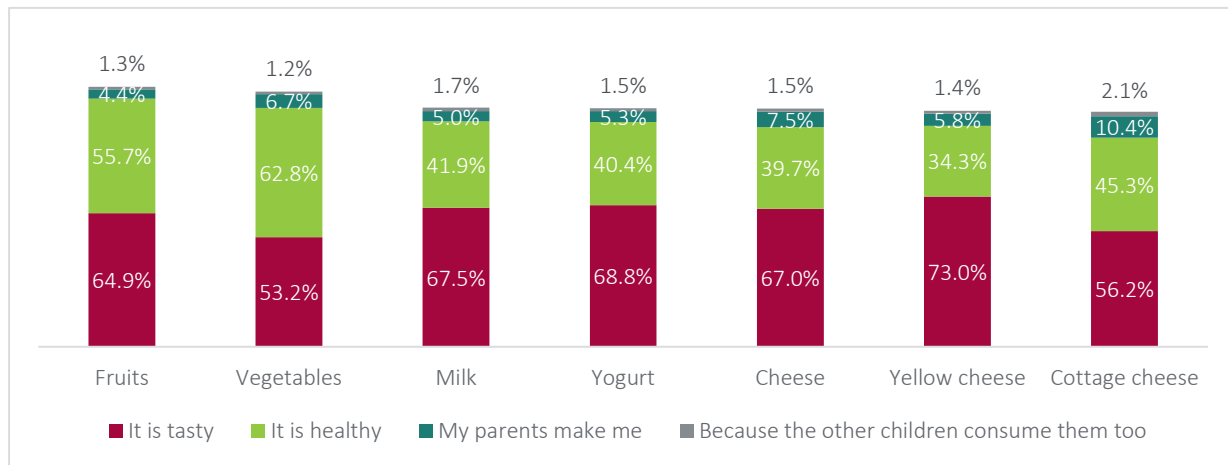
successful implementation of school schemes, their good acceptance by parents and children, as well as for transmission of healthy eating education.

Chart58. Do you like eating and drinking...? [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



Healthy foods are both tasty and healthy. The majority of the target group representatives is of similar opinion regarding all types of products offered within the school schemes. With few exceptions, the factors “because my parents make me eat them” and “because other children also consume them” are almost absent from children’s answers. All this allows us to conclude that the school schemes (along with other external factors) have achieved their main goal – namely, to educate children in the perception that these products should be consumed because they are healthy (and tasty) and not because it is an obligation. Such a positive attitude towards healthy foods will help forming sustainable healthy eating habits among children.

Chart 59. Why do you like eating or drinking...? Multiple choice question. Each column is not equal to 100%, and they are presented in descending order according to the sum of the answers to each of the options. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



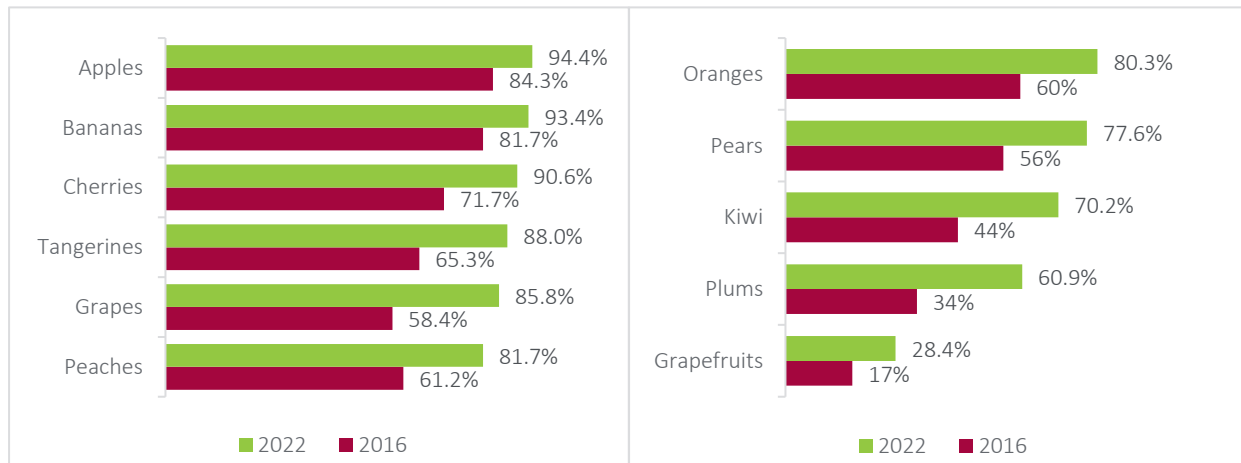
When asked specifically, children and students have no difficulty sharing their favorite fruits. Almost all representatives of the target group like to eat the most frequently distributed fruits within the “School fruit” scheme – apples and bananas. Fruits that are considered less appetizing to children and students are grapefruit (1/5 of those who know this fruit like to eat it) and plums



(where this share is just over 50%). It is important to note, however, that this year’s survey reports an increase for all listed fruits compared to the 2016 survey in the share of those who said they like their taste. As shown in the following graph, over the period of 6 years, the favorite fruits have become even more liked by children, and less popular ones such as pears, kiwis, plums and others, are liked by more and more representatives of the target group. Such a noticeable difference in the attitudes of children and students **is an indicator of the right measures that are being taken in the direction of increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables and educating an approach to healthy eating.** It would be difficult to determine here what are these external social and economic factors that have led to such a positive result, but it is quite right to speculate that the Scheme for supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in the educational establishments plays a significant role for achieving these more than satisfactory results.

An average of 8 out of 11 listed fruits are indicated as favorites to eat, which practically means that almost all fruits distributed under the Scheme are well received. With the increase of children’s age, the number of fruits they like to eat the most also increases, which is an indicator of building healthy eating habits as children grow.

Chart 60. Preferred fruits, share of those who answered “yes” to the question “Which of these fruits do you like eating the most?” [Basis : 23,158 children and students]

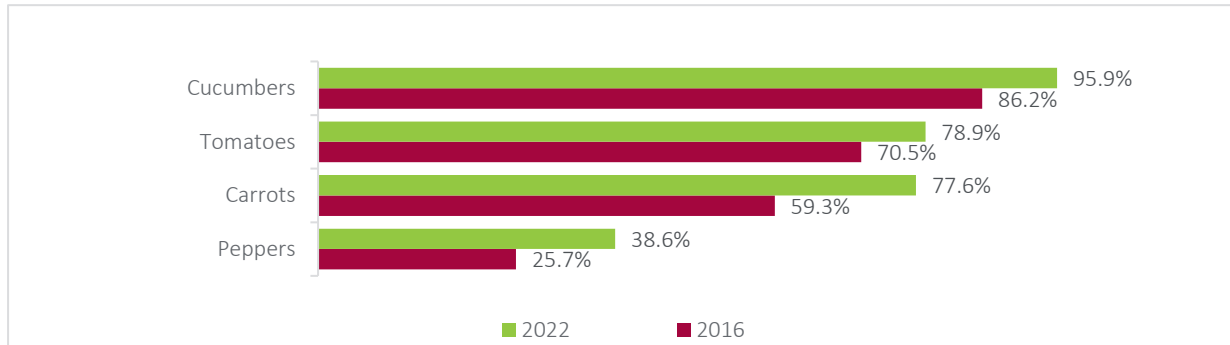


The types of vegetables distributed under the School Fruit scheme are less popular with children than fruits. Here again, however, it is necessary to mention that there is a change in a positive direction compared to 2016, and six years later, a greater number of children and students say that they like the taste of cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots and peppers.

On average, 3 out of 4 types of vegetables offered in the Scheme are liked. And here, as with fruits, the taste for vegetables develops as children grow, which is an indicator of the sustainability of their healthy habits.

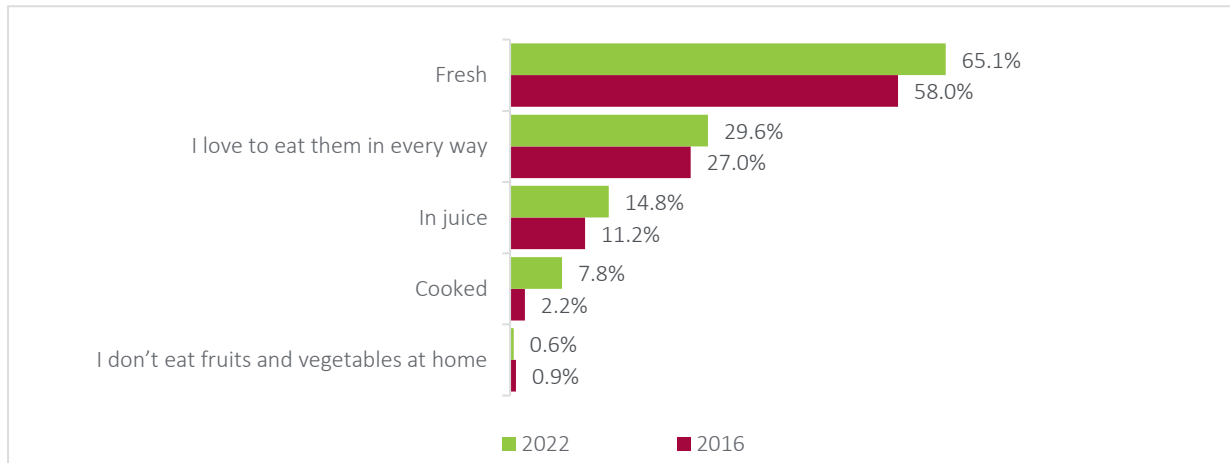


Chart 61. Preferred vegetables, share of those who answered “yes” to the question “Which of these vegetables do you like eating the most?” Basis : 23,158 children and students



Compared to 2016, more types of ways to consume vegetables are indicated. Most often, vegetables are preferred fresh (65%), and for 1/3 it does not matter how or if they will be processed.

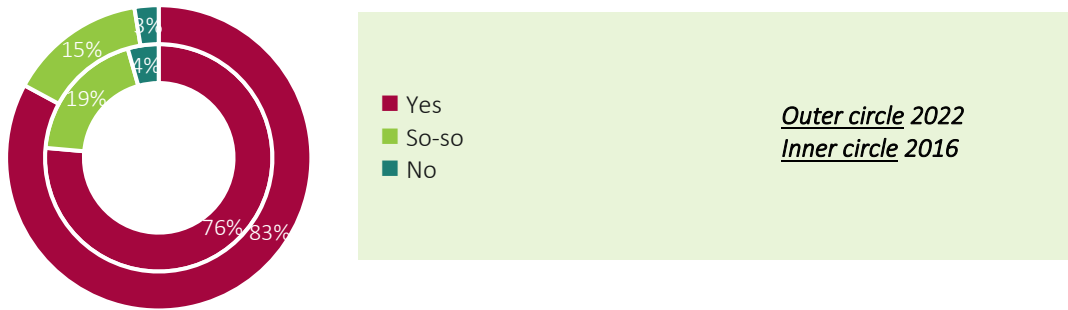
Chart 62. Preferences to the way vegetables are consumed. [Multiple choice question. Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



The answers to the following question confirm the above said. A minimum number of children (3%) openly state that they do not like uncooked fruits and vegetables, while eight out of ten children categorically state that this way of consuming is pleasant for them.

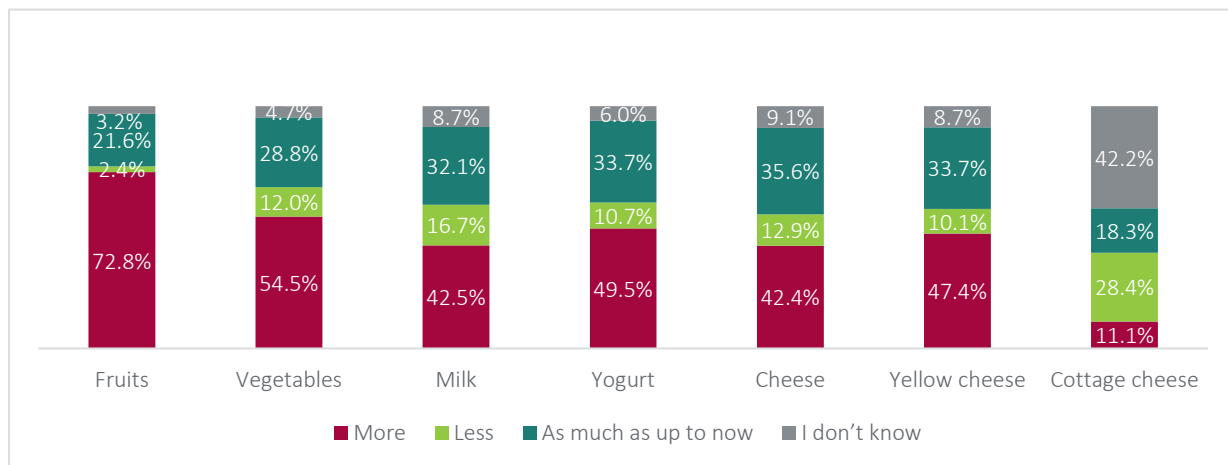


Chart 63. Do you like to eat fresh, raw, uncooked fruits and vegetables? [Basis 2022: 23,158 children and students up to 4th grade; 2016: 1600 educational establishments]



Fruits, probably because of their sweet taste and attractive appearance, are the ones that children would like to consume more than the rest of the products offered in the schemes. It is important to note here that only about one in ten children would prefer to consume less fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products than they currently do. The only exception is cottage cheese, where a large number of children cannot judge whether this product is tasty and healthy for them or not. The fact that with regard to all products (except cottage cheese), we establish positive attitudes towards their consumption, as well as a preponderance of those who answered “more” than “as much as now”, is a prerequisite for their sustainable inclusion in the children’s diet in the long term.

Chart 64. Do you want to eat or drink more or less of the following products?? [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]





In order to have better thoroughness of the results, additional statistical processing was applied to the answers to the question “Do you want to eat or drink more or less of the following products?”. The following groups are differentiated through the so called⁴ cluster analysis:

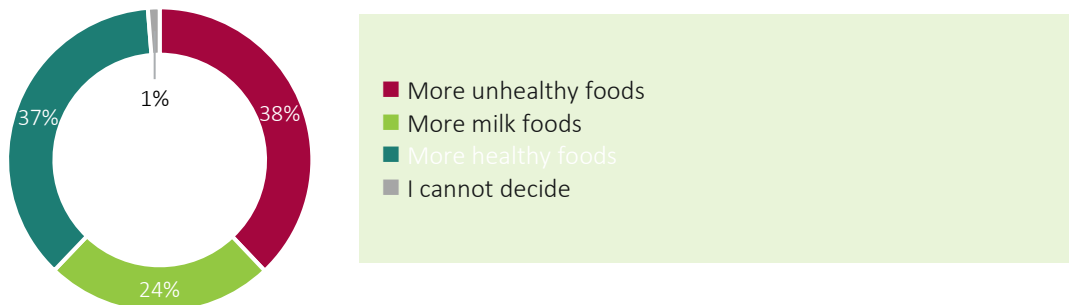
Figure4. Grouping the representatives of the target group according to what they would like to consume more. Cluster analysis. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



Cluster analysis does not form clean, explicit groups. The groups generally show what is characteristic of them, the common that connects the people in the formed cluster.

Interestingly, for all three groups, children want to consume more fruits – i.e. fruits are liked and desired, regardless of attitudes toward unhealthy foods.

Chart65. Grouping the representatives of the target group according to what they would like to consume more. Cluster analysis. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



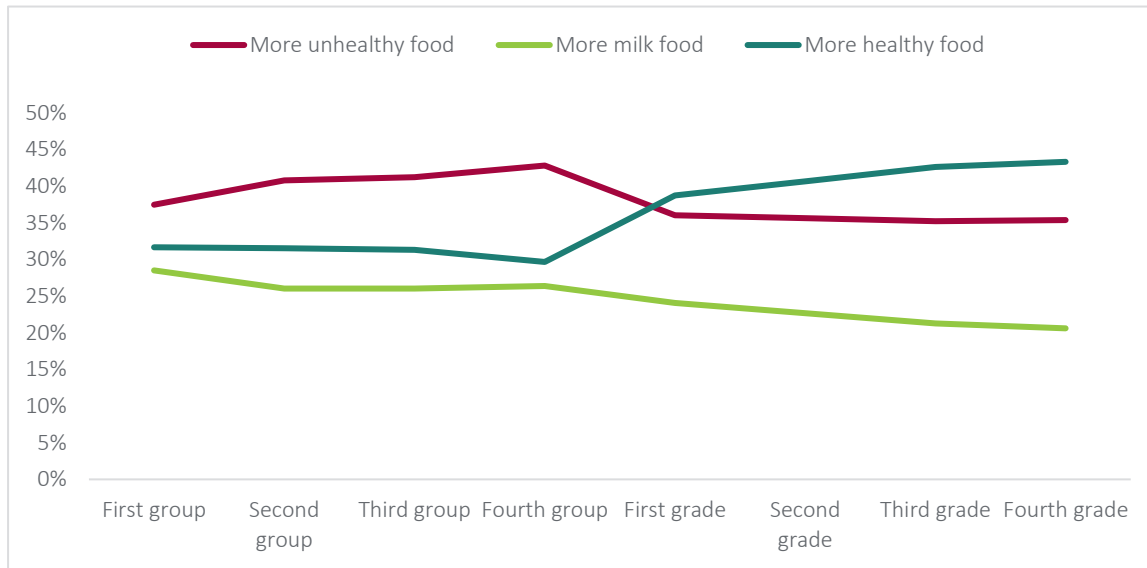
The desire for unhealthy foods reaches its peak in the 4th group in kindergarten – the time when the child meets more and more tastes and wants to try adult food. He/She wants to be more

⁴ Cluster analysis or clustering is a statistical method for data analysis, by means of which many diverse objects are grouped in such a way that the objects of the same group (called a cluster) are the most similar (on a given attribute) among themselves compared to the objects assigned to the other clusters.



independent in his/her decisions and choose alone what to eat. The attraction to unhealthier and less accessible foods is normal. After the first grade, this desire diminishes, and the awareness of the benefits of healthy food is increasingly visible at the end of primary education. **Most likely, the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in the educational establishment has had a significant impact.** Because, unlike in kindergartens, in school the child can make a choice whether to eat the offered fruit without having obligation and control from the teachers.

Chart66. Grouping the representatives of the target group according to what they would like to consume more. Cluster analysis. [Basis: 23,158 children and students up to the 4th grade]



The participants in the qualitative study ambiguously share their assessment that the school schemes have fulfilled and are fulfilling their purpose of changing children’s attitudes towards healthy eating. Specific examples of how the target group’s attitudes towards fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products have changed over the years are repeatedly mentioned.

“Rather, the shopkeepers can tell what is going on, but in our institution, in the long break, we observe that the big students of grades 5-7 come back from the store with bananas or some kind of fruit rather than with pizza. There is certainly a sustainability and improvement in the eating habits of the students.”

Educational institution, South Central Region

“As I said earlier, their grandchildren learned to eat fruits. The children learned what a fruit is and how to eat it. For me, this program is a very good thing. I have said this more than once to everyone who have asked me questions. This is a good thing that should continue. If possible, it should be mandatory.”

Applicant, Northeast Region

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M: And do you have any observations over the children who were part of the scheme but are no longer in that group?

R: Yes, I have. Our school is primary and generally I have observations over all the students.



M: What is it?

R: Their habits are changing. As much as you want to teach them eat healthily, by watching each other, by not being that controlled on what they eat, habits change.

Educational Institution, Northeast Region

Such a change in the attitude towards healthy products is observed in all planning regions, which indicates that the schemes achieve the same effect across the country.

“I have a son who is that age and is participating in the program at the school he attends and I see him starting to look for these products that I know he gets there. From there I can make some kind of picture. At the very beginning, when we started the program, we had feedback from the directors that many of the products were being thrown in the bins or kids were throwing them at each other. This has changed over the years and now I can say that a large part of the target group of these programs consumes the products and is looking for them and expecting them, which is the most important thing.”

Applicant, Southwest Region

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“In our kindergarten, children like to eat fruits. Even if there was someone who frowned at the beginning in the first group, by constantly having fruits every day, the children finally start eating. There is a success in having more fruits in the kindergarten.”

Educational Institution, Southwest Region

6.3 TOPIC 3: EFFICIENCY AND COHERENCE

6.3.1 Question No. 1: “To what extent has the best possible ratio between used resources and achieved results been achieved?”

By its very nature, *efficiency represents the most optimal ratio between the resources used and the results achieved in the implementation of a given goal through an intervention*⁵. For the purposes of this report, an indicative assessment of the efficiency of the schemes will be given, as the available information is not sufficient to give a complete picture. Also, the specifications of the school schemes do not allow efficiency to be measured by traditional methods (for example relating the working days of the covered persons to the realization of the budget and results). Accordingly, the answer to this question will be based on information regarding:

- Amount of distributed products compared to the spent budget (BGN/kg)⁶

⁵ Pursuant to Art. 27, para. 2 of the EU Financial Regulation.

⁶ For the four considered school years – from 2017/2018 to 2020/21 inclusive

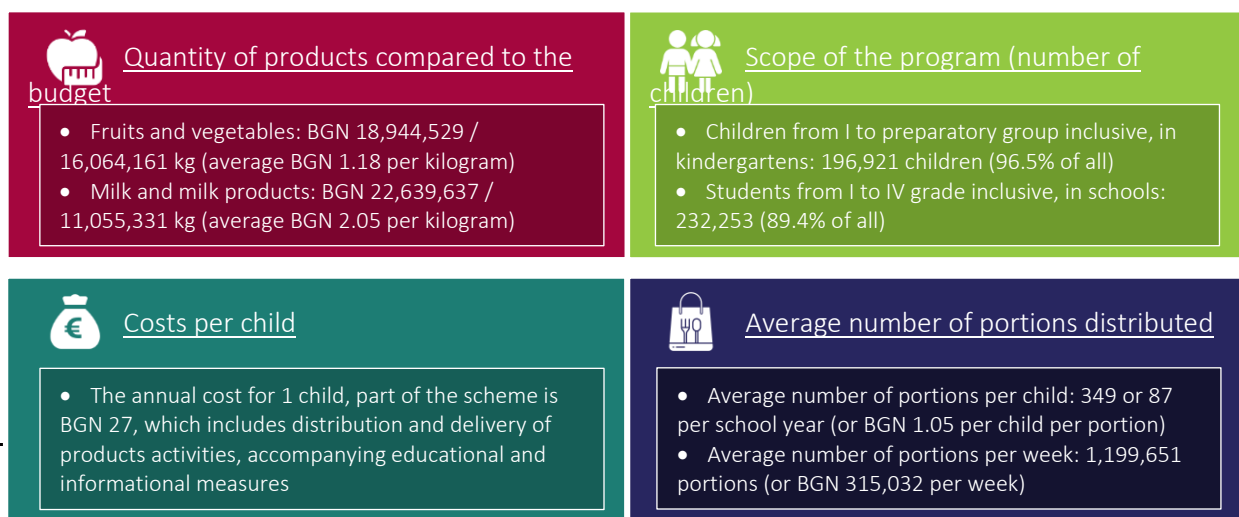


- Program scope (number of children)⁷
- Costs per child (BGN)⁸
- Average number of portions distributed per child and per week depending on the budget spent⁹

The analysis of the information from the Monitoring Reports and the results and the effect of the intervention show that a **high level of efficiency has been achieved** in the implementation of the school schemes. With the available budget, almost all representatives of the target group are covered (96.5% of kindergarten children and 89.4% of students up to IV grade). Over 16,064 tons of fruits and vegetables with a total value of BGN 18,944,529 were distributed over the four years under consideration, which means that an average of BGN 1.18 was spent on 1 kilogram of fruits and vegetables. Given that this price includes delivery costs, the price of the product itself, as well as the applicant’s profit, it can be assumed that the average price per kilogram of fruit and vegetables is good – neither high nor compromising the quality of the implementation of the schemes because of its low price. A similar conclusion can be drawn also regarding the milk and milk products distributed within the schemes. From the school year 2017/18 to 2020/21 inclusive, more than 11,055 tons of milk and milk products were distributed at a price of BGN 22,639,637, or an average of BGN 2.05 per kilogram of products. Given that the milk and milk products that are distributed within the school schemes must necessarily meet the Bulgarian state quality standard, we can claim that the price of these products is favorable.

The coverage of an average of 454,429 representatives of the target group during the last 4 school years cost about BGN 315,000 per week, and within every seven days, nearly 1,200,000 portions of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products were distributed. In this sense, the annual cost for 1 child, part of the scheme, is BGN 27, including delivery, price of the product, awareness activities and accompanying educational measures and others, part of the budget of the schemes.

Figure5. Key indicators for measuring the efficiency of the schemes. [Source: Monitoring reports and own calculations]



⁷ For the school year 2020/21..

⁸ For the school year 2020/21.

⁹ For the four considered school years – from 2017/2018 to 2020/21 inclusive, total for fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products



The efficiency of the schemes is also calculated according to several other indicators: through the so-called “**distribution density**” and “**distribution efficiency**”. Within the framework of the 2012 report of AFC Consulting Group on the evaluation of the school fruit and vegetable distribution scheme, these two indices are presented for each European country that was part of the scheme at the time, including Bulgaria. According to the methodological guidelines in the report, the indices were calculated as follows:

“Distribution density” = portions delivered per week to the educational establishment for 200 days/school year * portion size in gram

“Distribution efficiency” = distribution density * funds spent on fruits and vegetables

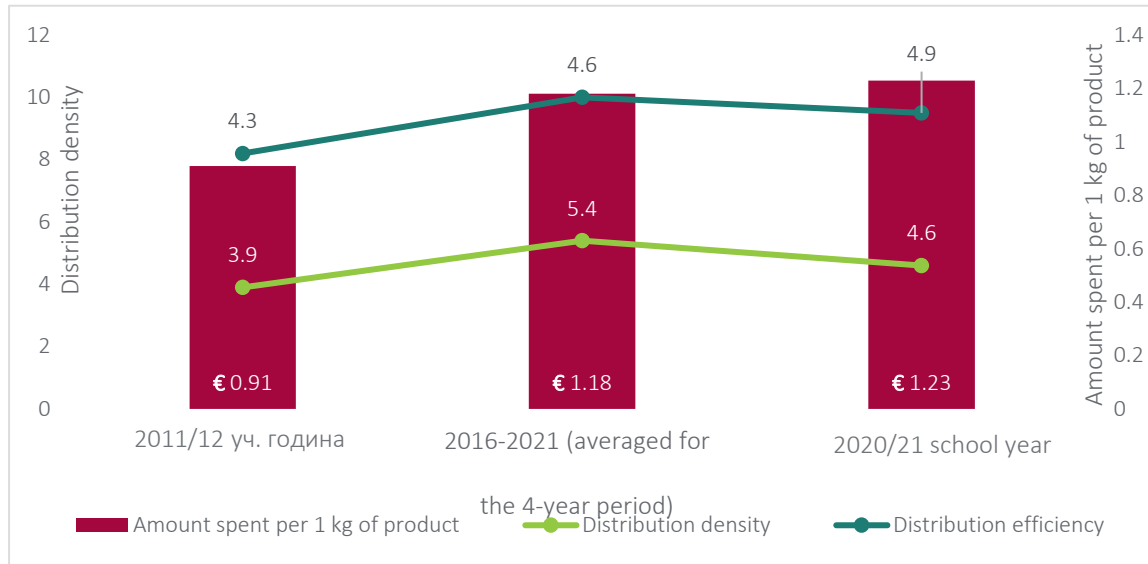
The higher the value of the index is, the more efficient the implementation of the scheme according to this indicator is.

The following graph presents the listed indicators for three periods: for the school year 2011/12 as calculated by the evaluation team of *AFC Consulting Group*, overall for the 4-year period from 2016 to 2021 and separately for the academic year 2020/21. Indicators apply only to the “School fruit” scheme for comparability of results.

The value of the amount spent for 1 kg of fruits or vegetables, logically, increases, reaching values of BGN 1.23 in the 2020/21 school year. The frequency of distribution is also increasing, reaching a factor of 5.4 in the four-year period under consideration. The value of the index decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic, but without reaching the lower levels recorded 10 years ago, which is a sign of the sustainability of the results. Perhaps the more important of the two indexes is the so-called “distribution efficiency”, which rises by 0.6 points, reaching a value of 4.9 in the 2020/21 school year. It is important to note here that the distribution efficiency increases even in pandemic conditions. For the entire considered period 2016-2021, the distribution efficiency index is lower (4.6) than the individually considered 2020/21 school year (4.9). This, in turn, is an indicator of the right direction in which the implementation of the school scheme is going.



Chart67. Indices for measuring the efficiency of the School Fruit Scheme. AFC Consulting Group's 2012 report on the evaluation of the school fruit and vegetable distribution scheme and own calculations based on the 2016-2021 Monitoring reports.



6.3.2 Question No.2: “Can better results be achieved with the same resources, or the same results with less resources?”

Given the reported effects of the implementation of the school schemes, which are expected to be even more tangible in the long term, as well as the high degree of efficiency of the resources used, **it is strongly recommended that the budget of the schemes should not be decreased in the future.** Decreasing the funds of the school schemes will only compromise the quality of the products and provoke implementation of activities contrary to the Ordinance by stakeholders. It is important to clarify that the results achieved in the last few years are due to minimum financial resources and represent the maximum of what can be achieved with the available budget. **It is of particular importance to allocate more funds for accompanying educational measures, which, however, should not be at the expense of other funds.** The larger budget for such measures will allow to return the focus to the education of children in healthy habits and will allow the results of the schemes implementation to be more sustainable over time. Currently, a significant number of parents and children perceive the implementation of the intervention as a social act, which assigns the scheme goals it did not set. Failure to fulfill such “additional goals” compromises the image of the scheme, and hence the fulfillment of its “real goals” is put under question.

In case the budget remains unchanged, the following configurations are recommended in order to achieve better results:

- **Avoiding too much focus on promoting local production and producers of organic products.** At this moment, the conditions described in the Ordinance are at the boundary of the feasible and an increase in the supply of Bulgarian products and organic fruits and vegetables would deprive the target group of access to a variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as to quality products.



- Work could be **done on expanding the target groups at the expense of introducing more organic products**. Children in nursery groups, as well as students from 5-th to 7-th grade in primary schools, are put in a situation of “outsiders”, as they are a minority in the educational establishments where products under the scheme are distributed, but at the same time they are direct witnesses of the supplies and consumption by the other children.

“In my opinion, the choice of children’s target groups should be expanded. Especially in kindergartens in smaller settlements, where the groups are mixed, they have some small problems, such as the fact that the children in the nursery groups do not receive products and unpleasant situations occur.”

Educational Institution, North Central Region

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“In terms of building eating habits, I think it is good this to be until 7th grade, as the colleague said. The other children should also receive, because they walk and eat in the corridors and the others see this. It becomes more difficult for the school authorities themselves to explain why there is for some children and for others – not.”

Educational Institution, North Central Region

- **Utilization of the provided funds for accompanying educational measures and organization of more practical activities.** Involving the applicants in the implementation of practical educational measures would help and facilitate the organization.

6.3.3 Question No.3: “To what extent is the intervention non-controversial and does the intervention not conflict with other interventions with similar objectives?”

No contradictions are registered in the logic of the intervention presented in [item 4.1](#).

No other active school programs are identified that overlap the activities of the “School fruit” and “School milk” schemes, making them an important and indispensable measure within the school milk systems. The so-called “free snacks” – basic and supportive, which, together with the school schemes, cover the same target group, are distributed in the educational establishments. However, the difference between the two programs is tangible and it is important to communicate the advantages of the “School fruit” and “School milk” schemes over the “free” snacks in the educational establishments. The products that are distributed in the form of snacks have been repeatedly commented in the media space as being of poor quality. In turn, school schemes focus solely on high-quality products in line with the recommendations of health experts and aim to promote healthy eating among children and change their attitudes towards fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products. These two main differences exactly should be leading in the implementation of communication activities. The only area of overlapping between these two programs is in relation to the cases where the product received under the school schemes is the same with that delivered under the supporting snack.

“I have no objections from the parents. The only thing I have set as a condition for myself is to clarify with the company that provides my catering meals. It happened sometimes that the dessert and the fruit are the same, but these things are a moment of further clarification.”



Educational Institution, South Central Region

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“As the administrators are here with me and we comment that without the schedules, they cannot order the fruits right. Sometimes the two fruits are duplicated. That way, they figure out what other fruit to order.”

Educational institution, Southwest Region

Another identified similar program is on the topic “The responsibility to actively treat nutrition as a European value” under the Erasmus+ program. Here, however, the two programs do not contradict each other, on the contrary, they help to achieve their common goals. Given the lower distribution of the accompanying educational measures within the school schemes, the activities under the Erasmus+ project actually complement the registered gaps of the schemes in this respect.

“We are working on the Erasmus+ project on the topic “The responsibility to actively treat nutrition as a European value”. This activity is promoted in school, photo exhibitions are prepared and the project activity is presented.”

Educational institution, North Central Region

6.4 TOPIC 4: RELEVANCE

This part of the report aims to determine whether the intervention met the addressed needs—whether the objectives were appropriate to address the needs and problems.

Addressed issue:

The data from the national nutrition survey used in the National Strategy for the implementation of the scheme, for determination of the base level are too outdated, but in general show an unfavorable trend – towards a decline in the consumption of fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products with the children’s age increase. The data regarding milk and milk products are particularly unsatisfactory, since they are quite far from the minimum norm. At the same time, just over one third of the children between the ages of 7 and 10 consume milk every day. Against the background of these results, the data on obesity and overweight of Bulgarian children are logical and highly disturbing. In early childhood, obesity is mainly associated with overeating, especially in the cases where the ratio between proteins and carbohydrates is disturbed. It usually happens when a regular meal is replaced with carbohydrates and fats. According to a study by the World Health Organization from 5 years ago, Bulgaria is in fifth place in the ranking of children obesity among 53 countries in Europe. 224,898 children between the ages of 5 and 18 are overweight (26.2% of all), and 58,370 of them are obese. Moreover, according to these data, it is expected 230,000 school-age children to be overweight by 2025 in Bulgaria.

In March 2021, the Bulgarian Association for Study of Obesity and Related Diseases stated that the national recommendations for healthy eating are followed in nurseries, kindergartens and schools. Nevertheless, 30 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 18 are overweight, and



every tenth child is obese, and the forecasts are more than unfavorable – it is predicted that a quarter of Bulgarian children will be obese by the middle of the century. This trend shows that children eat extremely unhealthy food outside of kindergartens and schools, which testifies to the lack of established preferences and habits among them and mainly among their parents. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Bulgarian children are in the most unfavorable position in the EU in terms of physical activity and time spent in front of a screen. The initial situation is characterized by unsatisfactory levels of intake of fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products by the target groups. According to the very outdated data from the National Nutrition Survey conducted by the National Center for Public Health and Analysis nearly a decade ago, the intake of the foods in question is around and below the minimum recommended, and as children grow, it is decreasing instead of increasing.

Identified short-term results:

- Almost all children, part of the scheme consume fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products at least once a week
- High recognition of fruits and vegetables
- Reducing the intake of unhealthy foods and drinks
- Expressed desire for more frequent consumption of healthy foods
- Expressed desire to participate in practically oriented accompanying educational measures

Identified long-term results:

- Change in the attitudes of the target group regarding the intake of healthy products
- Increase of the intake of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products
- Existence of direct and indirect positive peer pressure, which would multiply the effect of the implementation of the school schemes and make it sustainable over time

In conclusion, it can be summarized that the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments is relevantly addressed to the characteristics and needs of the target group and the society.

6.5 TOPIC 5: ADDITIONAL VALUE

Within the framework of the this evaluation, three aspects have been identified that can be defined as added value to the implementation of the schemes.

1 First of all, school schemes are also perceived as **helping parents and vulnerable and marginalized groups**. The social aspect of the school schemes was advocated very frequently in the conversations with the stakeholders, and the results of the quantitative study reinforce these observations.

“Definitely yes. I have noticed that children from vulnerable groups really need this kind of support and eat all the food they are given in the morning or at lunch. It helps and is very useful. We have few families in a bad financial situation, but for those who are, their children eat everything. In fact, colleagues have observed that when it is an apple or something harder, they put it in the bag and take it home. They are not children who throw away and do not appreciate what is provided to them.”



Educational institution, South Central Region

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“Of course! They contribute a lot. We have many children of Roma origin who cannot afford to eat that on a daily basis, and 40-50% do it only in the kindergarten.”

Educational Institution, Southeast Region

The existence of such added value takes an important part of the overall evaluation of the school schemes. Although the schemes do not specifically aim to help socially disadvantaged children, this indirect effect contributes significantly not only to building a positive image of the program, but also to improving the eating habits of those who are most vulnerable.

2 In addition to helping vulnerable groups of children, school schemes also support **vulnerable educational establishments (especially kindergartens)**. The social and demographic specifics of certain settlements in Bulgaria also predetermine the state of educational establishments in these regions. By distributing healthy products within the schemes, kindergartens can more easily meet the financial challenges that are an everyday problem for a large number of these establishments.

R: It is not only the parents that could not afford it. The kindergartens that are on a delegated budget and we are located in smaller settlements and we do not have enough children to have a bigger budget, we could not afford that kind of variety. We would hardly be able to meet all the norms 100% if it were not for these programs. They are a big help to our budgets. All the benefits for the children regarding the variety and the habits they get are in addition to that.

R: In this regard, I also want to support my colleague, that this helps a lot. We are on a delegated budget too, but why according to the Ordinance of the Regional Health Inspectorate regarding weights (the colleagues know what I am talking about) certain weights are required from the State Fund Agriculture and these schemes do not cover these weights? Only the cheese and yellow cheese cover the required weight. For milk – it is less.

Educational establishments, Northwest Region

However, it is necessary to clearly communicate the message that school schemes are not social schemes, otherwise some of the target groups will have unjustified expectations.

3 The last, but not least, identified added value is the fact that **the school schemes distribute high quality food products**. The fact that there is no compromise with the quality of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products is a guarantee of achieving sustainable results.

“The good thing here is that the milk products are necessarily the best. These are BDS products, i.e. they are produced only from milk using certain technologies. The fruits now are actually Bulgarian. The number of deliveries of organic fruits and organic products is increasing. The best possible nutrition is chosen and this is how traits are formed in children. How will he go to buy an organic product when he is 25 years old, when he has not had the chance to try it before and he will say to himself: “How am I going to give that much money when it is probably the same?!”, but he has never tried it.



6.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.6.1 Efficiency of the scheme

The quantitative research in 2022 did not register any particular change in the frequency of consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products by children and students within educational establishments. Six years after the first survey, stability in consumption is established, which is a sign of sustainability of the results and uniform implementation of the schemes over the years. However, there has been an increase in the children taking these healthy products when they are at home, which may be due to two factors: a change in the family environment itself (such as attitudes, financial situation, etc.) and/or a change in the attitudes of the child himself and his desire to consume fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products outside the scheme.

The consumption of healthy products in the educational establishment has a strong influence on the total amount of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products taken by the children. For those representatives of the target group, who are more vulnerable in social and financial terms, the presence of a Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in the educational establishments proves to be of great importance for their healthy diet. Although this shifts the focus of the Scheme to a social one, its contribution to ensuring healthier lives for vulnerable and marginalized groups should not be overlooked. It should also be noted that the results of the implementation of the Scheme will be visible in the long term as well. Although for some families it has a social burden, after time results can be seen in terms of the change in the healthy habits of the children of these groups.

Without the existence of this scheme, a large number of these children would not take healthy products at all or very rarely. It is the presence and implementation of the Scheme that has a strong impact on children whose families cannot provide them with the necessary amounts of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products. The analysis of the data shows that if the school schemes did not exist, the children would go further away from meeting the requirements for minimum consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products per day. In this sense, the implementation of the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products is of great importance for the implementation of the overall policy for improving the health status and habits of the population.

In Bulgaria, there is a significant group of parents who follow the recommendations for the healthy nutrition of their children, but there is also misinformation and a lack of culture in this regard. Such a deficit cannot and should not be overcome solely by the implementation of the Scheme for the supply of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products in educational establishments.

The study establishes an intake below the minimum per day of fruits, vegetables and milk, probably due to the wrongly estimated ration by the parent. The trends established by the study



show that the Scheme is achieving its objectives and the long-term results are yet to be identified.

6.6.2 Main lessons learned

- 1 The engagement of children and parents in the intake of healthy products goes through their awareness.. The involvement of parents in the process of building healthy habits of their children by increasing their awareness on the subject is important for achieving long-term results.
- 2 The accompanying educational measures are extremely insufficient, which reduces the effect of the implementation of the schemes. Children and students should build and strengthen their positive attitude towards healthy products through practical activities in the educational institution.
- 3 School schemes are also perceived as social policy, and the poor communication about the aims of the schemes can compromise their image. The aims and opportunities of school schemes should be clearly communicated.
- 4 Focusing on peripheral goals of the schemes (for example, supporting local production) may be detrimental to the main target group - children and students up to IV grade. Excessive stimulation of local production would make it very difficult to supply a variety of fruits and vegetables in winter, and therefore the schemes would not be able to achieve their goals.

6.6.3 Recommendations for improvements

- 1 **To expand the target group** – it is recommended to include nursery groups and children from 5-7 grades in primary schools.
- 2 **To enhance the application of accompanying educational measures.** It is important that the accompanying educational measures are practically oriented – for example, mini/organic gardens can be created in the educational establishments, games, quizzes and others can be organized. Applicants can be included to help organize, together with the educational establishments, visits of farms, agricultural holdings and others.
- 3 **To enhance information and communication activities.** Parents should be well aware of the objectives and activities of the schemes. Also, the objectives and results of the schemes should be communicated to the general public through traditional information channels. It is also important to communicate the message that school schemes play a supportive role and are not focused on helping the socially weak and vulnerable people.
- 4 **The application/reporting system should be modernized and digitized.** If resources allow, it is advisable to create a unified system or platform where both parties to the schemes can easily and quickly communicate, for example by uploading and/or updating important information within the schemes.
- 5 To include a requirement and provide funding for bio/recycled product packaging so that care for the environment can also be educated.



6 To create a communication system between the applicants and the educational establishments, through which providers can receive up-to-date information on the number of children, and in turn, kindergartens and schools will be acquainted with the delivery schedule and types of products.



7 APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX NO. 1 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

QUESTIONS TO THE PARENTS

1. Please write down the full name of the school your child attends:

Write in words.

2. Please indicate your gender:

One answer

1. Male
2. Female

3. What is your age in years?

Write in figures.

4. What is your most recent degree?

One answer

1. Higher (PhD and above)
2. Higher (Bachelor, Master)
3. High school, college
4. Secondary special
5. Secondary general
6. Primary
7. Without education

5. You are:

One answer.

1. a student
2. (co-)owner/manager of a company
3. working in a managerial position
4. working in an executive position
5. unemployed
6. retired
7. housewife/on maternity leave



6. Which ethnic group would you identify yourself with?

One answer

- 1. Bulgarian
- 2. Bulgarian Mohammedan / Turk
- 3. Roma
- 4. Another ethnicity

7. How would you rate the financial situation of your household?

One answer

- 1. Much better than that of other households
- 2. Rather better than that of other households
- 3. Like that of other households
- 4. Worse than that of other households
- 5. Much worse than that of other households
- 6. I don't want to answer

7. Would you say that your child/children eats/eat healthily?

One answer

- 1. Definitely yes
- 2. Closer to yes
- 3. Rather not
- 4. Definitely not
- 5. I cannot decide

8. How often does your child consume:

Answer in each line according to the scale.

- 1. Every day several times a day
- 2. Once a day
- 3. At least once a week, but not every day
- 4. Less often
- 5. Do not consume at all

	At home	At school
1. Fruits and vegetables		
2. Milk and yogurt		
3. Milk products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese		
7. Chips, snacks, chocolate, waffles		
8. Carbonated and non-carbonated soft drinks (excluding water and fresh) sugar-free (for example sugar-free coke, sugar-free fanta, etc.)		
9. Carbonated and non-carbonated soft drinks (excluding water and fresh) with sugar (for example coke, fanta, etc.)		



9. Approximately how much of the following products does your child consume on average per week

Answer in each line. The options from q. 9, answered with 1 to 4, appear.

9999. I don't know

	At home	At school
1. Fruits and vegetables (write in grams total)		
2. Fresh and yogurt (write in milliliters total)		
3. Milk products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese (write in grams in total)		

10. Approximately what percentage of your child's total daily nutrition are

Answer in each line. Specify a percentage of each option. The options from q. 9, answered with 1 to 4, appear.

9999. I don't know

	Percentage
1. Fruits and vegetables	
2. Milk and yogurt	
3. Milk products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	

11. Does your child consume more or less of the following products now compared to a year ago?

Answer in each line.

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Much more | 4. A little less |
| 2. A little more | 5. Much less |
| 3. About as much as before | |

	Code
1. Fruits and vegetables	
2. Milk and yogurt	
3. Milk products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	

12. At home or at school, your child consumes more

Answer in each line.

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. At home | 2. At school | 3. About the same |
|------------|--------------|-------------------|

	Code
1. Fruits and vegetables	
2. Milk and yogurt	
3. Milk products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	

13. Are you familiar with the School Fruit and School Milk programs?

One answer

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Yes, in detail | 3. I have only heard of them |
| 2. Yes, in part | 4. I am not familiar |



14. To what extent do you think the School Fruit and School Milk programs are beneficial for children?

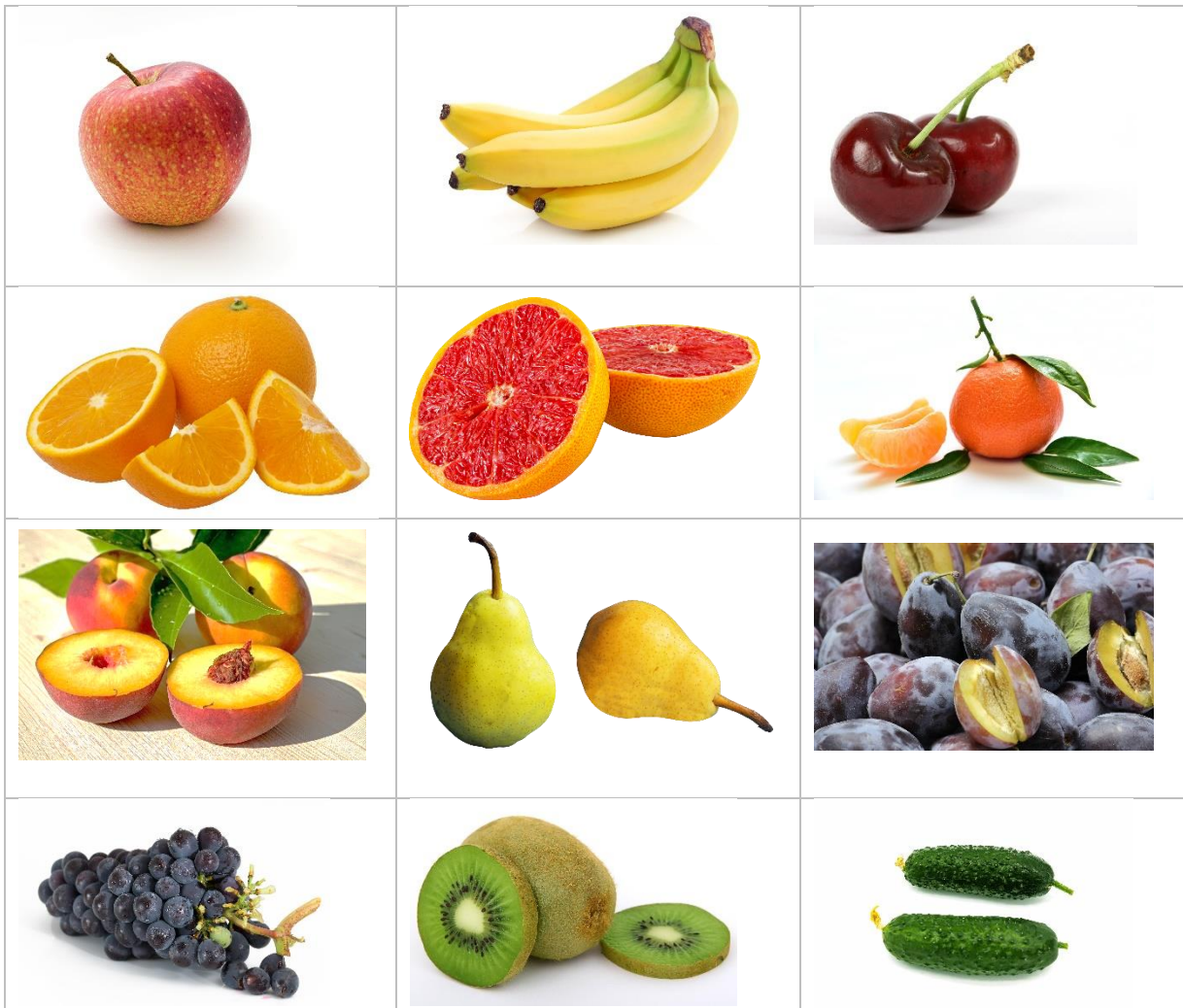
One answer

1. Extremely beneficial
2. Somewhat useful
3. They are not beneficial
4. I cannot decide

15. Would you show the child the following fruits and vegetables? Please mark each fruit or vegetable that the child names correctly.

Answer each photo

1. Recognizes
2. Does not recognize





QUESTIONS TO THE CHILDREN

16. Do you like to eat or drink?

Answer in each line according to the scale.

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. I don't know

	Code
1. Fruits and vegetables	
2. Milk	
3. Yogurt	
4. Cheese	
5. Yellow cheese	
6. Cottage cheese	

17. Why do you like to eat/drink?

Answer in each line. The options selected in q.17 appear

	Yes	No
1. Because they are delicious		
2. Because they are good for the health and full of vitamins		
3. Because my parents make me eat them		
4. Because the other children like to eat them		
5. For another reason		

18. Which of these fruits do you like to eat the most?

Answer in each line according to the scale.

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. I don't know

- 1. Apples
- 2. Pears
- 3. Peaches
- 4. Plums
- 5. Cherries
- 6. Grapes
- 7. Bananas
- 8. Tangerines
- 9. Oranges
- 10. Grapefruits
- 11. Kiwi



23. Do you like to eat fresh, raw, uncooked fruits and vegetables?

One answer

1. Yes
2. Sort of
3. No

24. Do you think that compared to last year now you eat/drink more:

Answer in each line. The options from q. 21, Answered with 1 to 4, appear.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Now I eat/drink more fruits and vegetables than last year | 4. Now I eat/drink less fruits and vegetables than last year |
| 2. I eat/drink as much fruits and vegetables as last year | 5. I don't know |

	Code
1. Fruits and vegetables	
2. Milk	
3. Yogurt	
4. Cheese	
5. Yellow cheese	

25. How often at school, in the kindergarten do they give you:

Answer in each line according to the scale.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Every day several times a day | 4. Less than once a week |
| 2. Once a day | 5. They don't give us at school/in the kindergarten |
| 3. At least once a week, but not every day | 6. I don't know because I don't want to take them |

	Code
1. Fruits and vegetables	
2. Milk	

26. How do you get the fruits, vegetables and milk you eat at school, in the kindergarten?

Mark all the answers that are true for you.

1. They give them to us at school
2. I bring them from home
3. I buy them from a store
4. I don't eat fruits and vegetables at school, in the kindergarten

27. Do you think that compared to last year, your school/kindergarten now gives you more fruits and vegetables?

One answer

1. Now they give us more fruits and vegetables than last year
2. They give us as many fruits and vegetables as last year
3. Now they give us less fruits and vegetables than last year
4. I don't know



28. Do you think that compared to last year, your school/kindergarten now gives you more milk?

One answer

1. Now they give us more milk than last year
2. They give us as much milk as last year
3. Now they give us less milk than last year
4. I don't know

29. What would you say about the fruits and vegetables that they give you at school, in the kindergarten?

One answer

1. They are always fresh and juicy
2. They are usually fresh, but sometimes we get them spoilt or rotten
3. They are rarely fresh, more often we get them spoilt or rotten
4. They are always spoiled or rotten
5. I don't remember

30. And what would you say about the milk you get at school, in the kindergarten?

One answer

1. It's always tasty
2. It's usually tasty, but sometimes it's gone bad
3. It is rarely tasty, more often we get it gone bad
4. It is always gone bad
5. I don't remember

31. Do you want to eat or drink more or less of the following products?

Answer in each line according to the scale.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1. More | 4. Do you want to eat or drink more or less of the following products?? |
| 2. Less | 5. I don't know |

	Code
1. Fruits	
2. Vegetables	
2. Milk	
3. Yogurt	
4. Cheese	
5. Yellow cheese	
6. Cottage cheese	
7. Chips, snacks, stick crackers	
8. Chocolate, chocolate biscuits and waffles	
9. French fries	
10. Sandwiches bought outside	
11. Sandwiches made at home	
12. Something else	



32. Which of the following things you have you done at school/in the kindergarten?

Mark all the answers that are true for you.

1. We visit farms or gardens
2. We make gardens and take care of them. They teach us how to grow fruits and vegetables
3. They teach us how to cook fruits and vegetables
4. They teach us how to protect nature and the environment
5. They teach us how to eat healthy
6. We have games, riddles, quizzes related to fruits and vegetables
7. They showed us brochures, posters, DVDs about fruits and vegetables
8. Other activities related to fruits and vegetables
9. No answer

33. Is it interesting to you to visit farms or gardens to show you what care fruits and vegetables need?

One answer

1. Yes
2. Sort of
3. No
4. I don't know

34. Is it interesting to you to learn and know how to grow your own fruits and vegetables?

One answer

1. Yes
2. Sort of
3. No
4. I don't know

35. Do you see posters, signs, drawings, photos, videos or other images of fruits and vegetables?

One answer

1. Every day several times a day
2. Once a day
3. At least once a week, but not every day
4. Less than once a week
5. In my school, kindergarten, there are no posters, inscriptions, drawings

36. When you are at home, how often do you feel like eating fruits and vegetables, but there are none?

One answer

1. Always
2. Often
3. Sometimes
4. Never



7.2 APPENDIX NO. 2 MODERATOR SCHEME FOR THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

- Brief presentation of the project and the moderator.
- Rules of the discussion and consent to recording the conversation.
- Brief presentation of the participants (city, workplace, position).

ASSESSMENT OF THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE SCHEMES

- How long have you been participating / applying under the School Fruit and School Milk schemes?

Would you rate all the stages of your participation in the schemes - from the time of application to the time of reporting:

TO APPLICANTS/SUPPLIERS:

- Was the information about the School Fruit Scheme and the School Milk Scheme information that you had before applying sufficient?
- Were the terms and conditions for participation in the School Fruit Scheme and the School Milk Scheme clearly specified? Are the selection criteria feasible?
- And in relation to the documentation? Have you had any problems filling in the required documentation? Is it understandable? (what is not understandable)
- What would you improve in the overall application process?
- And how would you rate the process of approval of the applications by the State Fund Agriculture? (rather fast, with clear feedback or vague, slow)
- Has your application ever been rejected? When? What were the reasons?
- Once you were approved, did you get enough information on what the next steps were? What else do you need to get as information?

FOR THE INSTITUTIONS:

- In your opinion, has the fruit, vegetable and milk scheme in the educational establishments promoted the intended broad partnership between education, health and agriculture? If yes - in what way? If not, why have the schemes failed?
- How would you rate the communication between applicants/suppliers and the responsible institutions?

FOR APPLICANTS/SUPPLIERS:



- What is the mechanism for selection of products that you distribute to educational establishments? What are the factors that determine this selection? (*separately for fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products*)
- Does price influence the selection of products for school distribution or not? And if yes – to what extent? (*separately for fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products*)
- How would you rate the reimbursement process for eligible expenses (including standard expense options)? In your opinion, does the chosen approach ensure the efficient procurement/distribution of products or not? Why?

FOR THE INSTITUTIONS:

- Do you think that the average cost of distributed products is reasonable or not? Why?
- And with regard to the costs of organizing accompanying educational measures? Why?

FOR SCHOOLS:

- Are the parents familiar with the schemes? How does information about the implementation of the School Fruit and School Milk scheme reach them?
- Is there anything that needs to be changed or improved regarding the parent-School Fruit and School Milk communication?
- Are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and milk products (for example, visiting farms, organizing games and competitions, etc.) organized in schools? If yes, how are these activities accepted by the children?

FOR ALL:

- How would you rate the communication with SFA? What can be improved?

ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHEMES

FOR ALL:

- Do the schemes contribute to increase the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products among children or not? Why? In what ways do they contribute or not contribute?
- What more could be done to increase consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products among children? (within the schemes)
- Do the School Fruit and School Milk scheme contribute to better and sustainable healthy eating habits among children or not? In what way?
- What can be done within the schemes to build more sustainable healthy eating habits among children?
- Does the implementation of the School Fruit scheme and the School Milk scheme succeed in raising awareness of the principles of healthy eating among: the children, the students, their parents, the teachers?



- To what extent are the School Fruit and School Milk schemes relevant to improving the eating habits of children, students and parents? What is their added value?
- To what extent do school schemes contribute to promoting the distribution of local and regional agricultural products?
- Does the implementation of school schemes meet the needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of children? In what way?
- In your opinion, would Bulgaria be able to distribute agricultural products in educational establishments under the current EU school scheme? In what way?
- What are the most important factors in building eating habits among children?
- How are the factors listed by you advanced in the aims of the school schemes?
- Which products do you think should be distributed through the EU school scheme in this way given the children's need for healthy nutrition?
- What about organic products?
- What educational measures among children should school schemes cover?
- Do you think the target groups of the scheme are suitable? Children at what age (kindergarten group, classes) should be covered by school schemes?
- Should priority be given to children who, due to their socioeconomic status and other factors, have less healthy and sustainable diets or not? If yes - how could they be included in a more tangible way?

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- What recommendations would you make for the further implementation of the School Fruit and School Milk schemes?



7.3 APPENDIX NO. 3 TRANSCRIPTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

7.3.1 Northwest region, 07.12.2022

M: You can introduce yourself very briefly. You may not quote the exact name of the school or company. After we introduce each other, we will start with the questions, and I will ask you to answer them quite calmly and quite honestly. There are no right or wrong answers.

We can start with the ladies if you want.

R: Hello! My name is T.C. and I am the principal of a primary school in Pleven province. We have starting working under the schemes of the State Fund Agriculture for the first time this year. I will say what I think a little later. Thank you!

R: My name is T.H. I won't turn on the camera because I'm on vacation and I'm at home. I am the head master at Zvanche kindergarten in the town of Kozloduy. We have been using the services of the State Fund Agriculture for two years.

M: Thank you!

R: Hello! My name is D.G. and I am the director of a kindergarten in Montana town. We have been working with the State Fund Agriculture and with these programs and schemes from the very beginning.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! My name is S.S. and I am a teacher in the primary school in the village of Bezhanovo. We have been working under this program since the very beginning.

R: Hello! My name is S.P. and I am the director of a kindergarten in Vidin town. We have been working under the program since the very beginning, when it was only for fruits and vegetables, and then milk and milk products were included.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! My name is D.O. and I am a beneficiary under the scheme. We have been working as a beneficiary under the program for 9 years. First only for fruits, and then already for milk and dairy products when they entered.

M: Okay, thank you! Who's left?

R: Hello! My name is V.R. and I am a primary school teacher in the village of Boynitsa. The school has been working under the program for a long time and we are satisfied.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! G.I. from Pleven. I represent a company participating in the programs.

M: Okay. I think there are two participants left. If they are here...

R: Hello! I am T.T. from Lom. I also represent a company that has been a beneficiary of the program since the very beginning.

M: Okay. Mr. V. is probably not here at the moment...



R: I want to ask why big companies are not invited? All over Bulgaria there are such large companies with hundreds of thousands of children and I am surprised that they are not invited.

R: Sorry to interrupt you! I am D.V. from Sofia and I am a representative of one of the beneficiaries. We are not such a big company, but we have about 80 sites. There are invited companies, but we are not that big.

M: These are the people who responded to our invitation. Plus, we have a limit of 10 people, so these are the ones who managed to join today.

I suggest that we start speaking to the point. There are general questions for everyone and specific questions for educational establishments and providers.

To applicants and suppliers:

Was the information about the School Fruit and School Milk schemes sufficient when you applied? Were the terms and conditions of participation specified well?

R: Yes. In general, there is always enough information on the page of the State Fund Agriculture. From this point of view, there are no obstacles.

M: Okay. Other opinions? Was the information clear when you applied? Are the selection criteria feasible?

R: Yes, so far we have not had a problem with the companies that deliver.

M: Regarding the documentation, is everything clear?

R: Yes. I'm not a principal, but the head teacher of the kindergarten, but I have some idea and we haven't had any problems with the companies. There may have been some minor problem, but he is dealing with the company. We haven't had any problems.

R: As a principal of a kindergarten from Montana, I can say the same. We haven't had any problems either. Everything is clear and understandable. When something is not very clear to us, we ask the companies we work with and it is explained. From a documentary point of view, everything is very accurate and correct.

M: How would you rate the application approval process of the State Fund Agriculture - fast with clear feedback or not clear and slow?

R: Yes, with feedback. When there is a problem or a simple inquiry, people answer.

M: Other opinions?

R: I didn't understand is this a survey about past things or we will discuss something new?

M: This is ...

R: Because not all of us have hours of time for such surveys, do we?

M: This is not a survey. This is a conversation...

R: You should have told me in advance that this is a survey about past...



M: This is not a survey. This is a discussion and we are discussing the implementation of the school schemes as written in the letter. That, in itself, suggests that we are discussing what is happening.

R: Yes.

M: Other opinions? How would you rate the application approval process of the State Fund Agriculture?

R: We apply and they approve. I don't know how we can rate it!

R: Every year at the end of August and the beginning of September, the approvals come out. Things are going normally in terms of approvals. If there are any omissions or something on the documents, they call, we correct them and so on. This is from my perspective as a beneficiary.

R: Yes. It's the same with us.

M: Have you encountered any problems in the whole process?

R: No.

R: No.

M: Okay. Now, especially for the representatives of educational establishments:

Have you received instructions on the application of the specific health requirements in the distribution of the delivered products and are they understandable?

R: Well, I can't understand your question, because we have regulations that we work with in relation to the application of food products in general, so we follow these things. They are in accordance with the requirements of the State Fund Agriculture, so I just do not understand the question.

M: Have you received instructions from the State Fund Agriculture related to how the products should be distributed?

R: And what would they tell us?

M: I am asking if you have received any.

R: They merely have nothing to tell us.

R: There is a regulation and we read it. What can the State Fund Agriculture tell us?

R: In principle, there are instructions that what we receive as... One of the instructions that we have is that we have to adjust our menus in compliance with the ordinance, so that this portion be given on the same day that it is received. A delivery should not be spread over 2-3 days, but it should be given on the same day. By the way, I wouldn't say that this is the best option and it should be thought about this matter a little.

R: This applies to the fruits. The milk can be given also in the following days. It is given per number of children. All the fruit must be given day to day, which is not appropriate.

R: Yes.

R: Because when there are fewer children, the fruits are given and the rest are thrown away.



R: It spoils, yes.

R: It is appropriate for milk.

M: And what would you suggest for the distribution of fruits and vegetables, then?

R: Well, let it be as it is with the milk.

R: Simply, there shall be no condition that it must be given on the same day.

R: Yes. With regard to milk, if we have 100 children, from which 90 children came, those 10 portions are given the next day. With regard to fruit, if we have 100 children, but 50 have come, we must give all 100.

M: What do you do with the rest of the fruits?

R: Well, we give them. We give everything at once because this is the requirement for fruits. It would be good, as with milk, to give today's supply to as many children as there are in the kindergarten, and the rest to be given the next day. Let it be like that both with fruits and vegetables.

M: Okay.

R: In the last years, only for milk we have a schedule, date and what we will get on that day, while for fruit we only have the date, without the product. Whether it will be a fruit, whether it will be a vegetable, we don't know. This confuses us a lot. Especially the kindergartens, we have our own kitchens.

R: Absolutely!

R: We had that in the beginning, when we started with the fruit and vegetable schemes. In the past years they say it can't be done and we are only given a date.

R: Can I say something as a beneficiary?

M: Of course!

R: I can tell about our practice with fruits. The point is that if we make such a schedule specifying what they will receive with these supplies from day 1 to day 50, we ... for example, on December 12th this particular fruit is gone and we have to replace it. Then it happens that we have already given a schedule that we cannot keep. I explain from our point of view why we don't provide an exact description - because we don't know exactly in 3 months if this particular fruit will be there. We, as a company, give the schedule with the dates upon application by signing the schedules. Then, 2 weeks before the end of the previous month, we inform the kindergartens what they will be getting for the month without changing the supply. I'm talking specifically about fruits.

R: That's an idea again, thanks!

R: Yes. I say that as an idea. This is how we practise and we make it very easy for them with this thing.

R: It's help, absolutely.

R: And there are no such squabbles: "Well, why did you change this for us?" etc.



R: Why is it not a cucumber, but a carrot - that's right

R: It's not so much about the replacement, it's about us making menus that parents have to be informed about, after which we have to consider the supply of the remaining products. From that point of view, the idea of 2 weeks in advance is nice.

M: Okay.

R: These are internal relationships between the beneficiary and the kindergartens.

R: Yes. I just mentioned.

R: Yes. Everyone has a different way of working with the company supplier

R: It is like that in most places. For milk products, we have exact schedules, while for fruits and vegetables, in most cases, we are given the dates and we don't have specifics exactly what we will get. Apparently it is like that in most places.

M: Okay. A question to the educational establishments:

Are the parents familiar with the schemes? How does information about the implementation of the School Fruit and School Milk schemes reach them?

R: In the information about the children's meal day that we provide day to day, it is described what is received as something extra from the State Fund Agriculture. It's like that with us.

M: And do you get any feedback from the parents?

R: So far we haven't had any. They just read the menu for the day. We haven't received any inquiries so far.

R: In addition to what the colleague says about the information given about the food for the week and for the day, I can say that we also organize various entertainments with such themes that involve the parents. As to feedback, I'm sorry to say it, but parents are waiting for something to be given to them and have never asked a question to have any feedback.

R: Yes.

R: They are familiar, but that's it.

M: And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students and children about the need for a diverse intake of fruits and vegetables organized?

R: Yes.

R: Such things are done.

R: We do it in the activities we have. We have planned ones for healthy eating, etc.

M: Okay. Now I have a question to the applicants:

What is the mechanism for selection of products that you distribute in the educational establishments and what are the factors that determine this selection?

R: We follow the regulation and the requirements. The fruits are chosen according to the season and we take into account what kind of farmers we have in the area, because part of the



regulation until now was 50%, and now there will be amendments for more. According to the regulation, we have to consider what product we can deliver, according to that what producers we have in the area, because they shall be four different ones in a month.

R: And we take into account the prices as well.

R: Absolutely!

R: This year, as the prices of goods have increased, we have begun to give fruits at the price at which they are paid to us. We can't buy bananas, let's say. The bananas are big and exceed the weight specified in the regulation. In order to get 400 kg of bananas, I have to take 600 or 700 kg to select better bananas and I have to sell the others. This applies to all other things as well. The oranges and the other things became so expensive in spring, as everyone knows, that we were already wondering what to give and had no choice. We just have to see the prices this year.

R: Yes, it is really so. You start at certain prices, then the products become more expensive and you change. In most cases some kilograms are also on our account because we simply have no way to fix it. In kindergartens, it is possible - there is no problem to deliver them in kilograms, because they have kitchens, but in schools, when you have to give one banana that should be 185 g, and it is 220 g, there is no way to divide it. This is valid also for the cucumber, unless it is a gherkin, but it is more expensive. There are cucumbers only in October and in November. After that they become very expensive and we actually have to give them away. This happens in many cases. There is no way to buy a cucumber from a Bulgarian producer below the price offered by the State Fund Agriculture. We have other costs too - warehouses that are paid for year-round, transport, workers, packaging, product inspection. There are also a lot of spoiled products delivered, and they have to be felt and examined.

M: You answered also my next question...

R: Can I add something too?

M: Of course!

R: I have listened to the colleagues and I would like to make the following proposal: the weight of the bananas to be increased, because it cannot be the way it is, as they said too. And there shall be a greater tolerance in the deviation in portions as it was in previous years, because otherwise it is very difficult to supply bananas, oranges, etc. in schools. Sometimes the tangerines are smaller but you can put neither 2 nor 3. There are a lot of useless fruits included, which are inapplicable under the scheme, such as nectarines, peaches, etc., which at the time of distribution under the program since September 15th at best, but then the classes are not formed yet, etc., are over and beyond their fruiting. There are other Bulgarian fruits - raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, which are good for children, but they are not included. Simply, the Ministry should think a little more practically and realistically, and ask these questions, as now.

The next thing is the prices, as colleagues have said. Do you know what was the price of the cucumber and the tomato in winter? Children should be deprived, especially in kindergartens, and they expect that there will be such in this period. The cucumber was with a twice higher price. The Deputy Minister, in a previous conversation, said that indexing during the school year is not possible. Why, since everything is indexed - gas, oil and whatever you can think of?!



R: They can do it!

R: That's right! How do they change our electricity every month, how do they change our gas, fuel? This is a function - understand it!

R: It's a floating thing, yes.

R: That is why we strongly raise the issue of adjustment once or twice a year. In this unpredictable world, in which the European leaders do not know what will happen in 10 days, you want to debone us.

R: Absolutely! Price update - that's the solution.

R: Yes. The price shall be determined in the beginning of September, for example, and not like your methodology so far, to take the low prices of fruits in summer, when people give them in the winter. These prices are not applicable at all.

M: We are external evaluators. I am not a representative of the State Fund Agriculture, but of a sociological agency and we are external evaluators.

R: I don't know. The discussion was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture. Since you are external evaluators...

R: Well, you can pass it on.

M: Yeah, that's the idea.

R: You can consider these as disadvantages. In fact, poor communication and poor methodology for work under the scheme.

R: Not only fruits, but also milk and milk products...

R: Yes. The example with tomatoes and cucumbers is analogous. And everyone in this country knows. At the same time, there is an obligation for Bulgarian fruits. How will the requirement for 75% of Bulgarian fruits be fulfilled, given that we have only apples for the winter period. Almost no one has pears. There is nothing else. As for the vegetables, we have tomatoes and cucumbers, which are very expensive in winter because of the heating and the electricity, and it is difficult to give them to the children, or we give them at our expense in order to have rotation.

The next point is the product rotation. How is the product rotation supposed to happen, with 75% Bulgarian products?

R: There should be also organic products, which shall be 12% and that's where things go...

R: Apples are mainly organic.

R: Yes, but since there are supposed to be four products and the month of January comes, how shall we diversify them?

R: Yes, that's exactly it. These are impossible things! They said they would think about rotation, but we don't see any thought being given to rotation anywhere. This is not applicable! Especially in this unpredictable period of life. If someone can, Momchil Neikov or anyone, let him predict it, sign it and we will fulfill it.

R: There is no such a person.



R: Yes, but he doesn't want price indexation, he doesn't want a reduction in rotation, he doesn't want a reduction of Bulgarian fruit from 75%, rather he had offered 100%! These are people who have never dealt with anything.

R: Yes, it is nice to manage from the top without being at the level of...

R: And why shouldn't there be blueberry, blackberry, raspberry? These are healthy products. At the same time, nectarine and apricot, which are not available at this time of the year, are included.

M: And how do you cope with this whole situation? You say that the winter period is the most difficult for you because of the prices, because of the lack of variety of products. How do you cope?

R: Do we have a choice when the ax is hanging over you? If you don't meet the rotation, you don't meet the percentage, you may not receive or you have to return money. What can you do? During this period I have taken tomato and cucumber at a loss. Probably the colleagues have also done this to fulfill the condition and the rotation.

R: Yes. We could hardly find even pears this year. Once or twice only.

R: We took quite expensive ones from Botevgrad.

R: Yes.

M: What about the other companies, were you at a loss?

R: Over the years - yes.

P: Yes.

R: I don't know of any company that hasn't been at a loss. Especially in the last year. As the gentleman before me said, the prices of tomatoes and cucumbers were double and triple the prices of the ordinance.

R: And bananas were more expensive in some months. What about milk products?! I am also a producer. Well, the packaging went up by 68%. And there you can't say I don't want! There are two suppliers in Bulgaria. There are 5 producers of these polyesters in Europe and they tell you "From tomorrow there won't be any!" Nobody cares. With today's date a small bottle for milk with a cap has risen exactly 98% percent at the manufacturer.

R: Well done! It's great what they do!

R: That's right. In our dairy, they raised our prices twice last year, because in fact their prices are raised from today to tomorrow and they have nothing to do.

R: The other thing: in the Ministry, everyone has enough information about grain prices. Feed is twice as expensive. As a result, also the milk, as a raw material, went up from BGN 0.70 to BGN 1.10. Calculate the difference. In the methodology, it is stipulated that the prices are determined on the basis of the previous school year, which is complete nonsense.

R: Absolutely!

R: Well, how are you going to make a forecast retrospectively?! We go forward with the prices.



R: AMIS collects, especially for fruits and vegetables, a large percentage, which is not a public secret, without documents. In most cases these are prices without VAT and they collect them as final prices because you go to the market and you can buy fruit and vegetables without VAT.

R: That's the other problem.

R: 20% disappear at once. Look, children can't be suffering.

R: Absolutely!

R: The good thing is that there are colleagues who have morals and do not allow themselves, and do the impossible, but, after all, for most it is a business. This is not a donorship and a social activity, and therefore they can't hold the children hostage.

R: They give us the prices when we have already started. The ordinance comes out with the prices when we have already started giving, and I want to see the prices before that in order to know if I should give up, because I have talked with many colleagues and we will give up the schemes in the fall. We cannot operate at a loss for a third year already. And at quite a loss.

R: And I want to mention another problem. It is good to support Bulgarian producers. I am "in favor" of children eating Bulgarian products, but Bulgarian producers, for the most part, do not issue real invoices. They issue one income order and we have to report to the State Fund Agriculture. I had a problem with some cucumbers, which the State Fund Agriculture paid to us with difficulty because we did not have an invoice. We have to look for such producers who actually issue VAT invoices, because we also have to settle them as documentation. This is also a big problem.

R: I would also like to ask something about honey. Why are all honey deliveries in one month? Is this a requirement, or is it simply how the supplier has decided in our case?

R: That is how he has decided it in your case.

R: There is no such requirement.

R: The supplier has decided so. It is normal to be uniform throughout the year.

R: Yes.

R: I would like to share a few more issues. Since you are an external evaluation company, you can propose that the deadline for receipt of documents be changed to be each month. The request should not be from the 1st to the 10th, but from the 5th to the 15th. How can you get a document on the 1st when you're transporting a product on the 30th and a multiple handing over documents, etc., have to be prepared? Moreover, there are also many holidays at that time – November 1st is National Awakening Day, from January 1st to 5th there is no work, from February 1st to 5th there is a mid-term vacation, March 3rd is a National Holiday, etc. This shows that the people who write and prepare these ordinance are out of touch with the realities of the respective sector. My suggestion is that this deadline for receipt be between the 5th and the 15th. It's more convenient, because if you can't submit your documents by the 10th, you lose that month and it's another month without money. Inflation has already eroded the value of that money that you should have taken to buy those products.



R: That's exactly what happened this year as well. Even the State Fund Agriculture gets irritated when it is in the last days - around the 9th and 10th. I agree that the deadline should be extended.

R: The next suggestion is to reduce the number of documents submitted to the educational establishments. Principals are also resentful. This is unnecessary paperwork. Especially since we are talking about a green planet, saving paper, etc. It can be combined in the request, with one signature of the principal, and not to make a handing over protocol, a separate commodity document with each delivery, which is a mandatory attribute required by BSFA. Why should there be...

R: 50 signatures!

R: Yes. Why should this be so, when the same quantities appear in the attachment to the request and the principal certifies them? It shall be thought about this paperwork, because it is more difficult for administering as well.

The next thing is the number of children. It's about the portions. We have nowhere to see what is the number approved and authorized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. After 3 months we receive information that the principal has signed all the requests, all the protocols, etc., and there were 5 or 15 children less according to the administrative system. Where can I see it and what am I to blame?! It is the principal who says how many students there are, etc. If it's a mandatory attribute and we're being cut out of money because we've delivered more portions without us being able to see them, then we should have access to a system available to all principals, schools, etc. Not to mention that this year the State Fund Agriculture used to sent letters to the inspectorates and the Ministry. There is an onerous system with a common information center. The relevant regional inspectorate cannot say how many children there are in its educational establishments (and it had no right either!) because there was a common information center established in Sofia. They waited one month for an answer. This is not serious! Based on this, they cannot pay us, or they pay us with many compromises, on the condition that later they will later issue adjustment acts. Do you understand?

R: Look now, here in Montana, when I have an adjustment in the number of children, it is done at the end of September and the beginning of October, as a last resort. If I have any change in December-February, I send a letter to the suppliers and they know the number they have to sent products for from the next month.

R: Madam, you say this, but if your colleagues don't do it?

R: Yes, this is up to fairness on the part of the colleagues.

R: You mention two periods, but in Sofia the number is dynamic every month. If you give me the number at the end of September and then at the New Year, it does not work, because the State Fund Agriculture is asking for it every month.

R: I know because they have checked me every single year. For one month, they came every day to measure each fruit. For milk - no, but for fruits and vegetables - yes, so I am familiar with what is being done. I mean, in the kindergarten, these are little kids. In school, if there are 100 enrolled, there are 100 in school, in the kindergarten their number varies and I have written an



explanation why a given child who is often ill and whose parents left him at home this month as well, was not present. I think that this is also slightly ridiculous.

R: It's absurd!

R: So, my proposal is that no obligations, responsibilities and sanctions should be imposed on us for something we have no information access to. Just because a principal is doing it doesn't mean that everyone...

R: I agree.

R: That's what I'm talking about. Not to mention that during a large part of the year the State Fund Agriculture does not have such either.

R: They can't let us in because we are the whole community...

R: Well, then they should not require it!

R: Yes, this should be specified more precisely.

R: Until now it was not required, but since this year it is. It doesn't matter that my principal has signed a request for a kindergarten for 100 children specifically, and then to be told that the administrative number is 85. I show them the letter of the principal, and they tell me: "Yes, but he has mistakenly included the preparatory groups." What am I to blame? We're talking about real business, not wagging out tongues.

R: I agree with you, but I say that from our point of view things...

R: No, we don't blame you I am saying that it is there as a requirement and obligation to us, not that the principals are to blame. Principals have enough work, but we cannot be sanctioned for something that is beyond our control and we have no way of controlling.

R: I agree with you. Just as we cannot be obligated that the children must be 100 on a list every day to eat the fruit.

R: It is not your duty and the ordinance allows it, because no one can say how many children will be sick the next day. The requirement is that the products must be distributed within the day or the next day, for milk products, among the children present - that's it.

R: This is clear and we have commented that it is not correct to give away all the fruit for the day like this. It should be as it is with milk. This is a waste.

R: May I ask the gentleman, because I understand that he also delivers fruits and vegetables, do you have a certain number of vegetable deliveries?

R: No.

R: You decide how many times you will give a fruit and how many times a vegetable a year?

R: We coordinate it with the kindergartens, of course. Every single thing is coordinated. There is no such thing as how many times a year. I think it is normal to have regularity in supply. There must be equal competitive conditions for all participants. Due to the rotation with the prices, many of the colleagues try to make the deliveries within the maximum allowable ones as per the ordinance in the months as quickly as possible within a predictable period, and it is good that this



be done regularly. We deliver even in June, in order to have some regularity. We are talking about the formation of qualities and habits in children!

R: It would be good to continue in time. Not to be until April and to end.

R: It has never been until April. Now it is written in the ordinance that it is until...

R: Until the end of April.

R: No, there is no such thing. It's until the end of June. Your suppliers try to do it faster and get their money, not as the ordinance says.

R: OK, thank you for that clarification.

M: I want to ask the suppliers:

How would you rate the process of reimbursement of eligible expenses, including standard expense options? In your opinion, does the chosen approach ensure efficient supply and distribution of the products or not?

R: We answered that the pricing methodology is incorrect and harmful to suppliers, especially in this difficult, wartime and pandemic period. The methodology does not correspond to the realities.

Sorry, we are aware of the administrative potential of the State Fund Agriculture and that they are doing the impossible, but four months to recover the funds in this difficult moment of lack of funding, of depreciation, of inflation, is a lot. Just as we are required to pay our taxes every month, notwithstanding whether we have money or not, so there should be reciprocity, no matter how offensive it sounds to the State Fund Agriculture. You perform from January 1st to 30th, submit by February 10th and wait for three more months...

R: And the program is already over.

R: Therefore we think it's right...

R: The money has been eaten 100 times by then.

R: That's right! This is correct, after submission of the request, in a period of one month. This is necessary at the moment. We know it will require more effort from them and perhaps some extra staff, but it will not be possible to endure in this way. Fuel has risen by 30% in four months. What do you cover? What expenses? With BGN 100 you used to buy 30 liters of fuel, and now you buy 20 liters. It's logistics. Where is this logistics assessed?

R: Nowhere.

R: Nowhere.

R: Look, you should recommend one thing and everyone in this state should understand it - there are no idiots, or if there are, they are few. This is at the expense of something, and what is deplorable at the moment is that it is at the expense of the children. Either a compromise with the quality, or tricks with the weights, or tricks with the numbers are sought, but this should not be so – forcing the participant to look for some loopholes due to an impasse.

M: And have you heard of companies and firms that apply similar "tricks"?



R: You don't expect us to tell you, do you?

M: No. I mean not tell me who they are, but have you heard of such a practice?

R: Is it a practice... Look, as the colleagues in the dairy sector are looking for loopholes to survive by rationalization, if I may say so, in the recipe, out of tolerance. On their part, this is necessary because otherwise they will go bankrupt and will lose their workers. It's the same here. Therefore, conditions should be created for everyone to have the little that is provided for him, so that there is an incentive for him not to do these stupid things, and not to put one-year prices on him, seeing that inflation has skyrocketed.

R: They don't see it up there.

R: Ah, they don't see it!

R: I have a toddler and he gets the stuff, but only the first month. Then, when the supplier company is not able to supply, my child stops bringing home. When I ask him why he doesn't bring anything, he tells me: "There is nothing, mom." It's been like that for weeks. Those things happen.

R: 2 years ago, a respected journalist accused me that we make a lot of deliveries to earn a lot, and in the previous years, 2 deliveries per month were made. I tell him: Sir, the number of deliveries has not changed for many years. That is why I tell you that the supplier should not think how to survive.

R: And what tricks to do in order to...

R: If the prices are good, there will be no such tricks. And if it is paid on time.

M: To the rest, do you have anything to add regarding the reimbursement process? Any recommendation or something not working?

R: It should happen a little faster. Not to wait for 3 months, because it really is a long time.

R: For the people who are suppliers, this is a large period of time. No one will work and supply, not even to children. In those 3 months, they go bankrupt and go away.

R: Not three, but four.

R: Yes. I'm on your side and I'm simply saying that these are unsettled administrative matters. Everyone gives, but he also wants to receive, right?! Both those people 'up there' and we.

R: Even if there is an error, they send us a notification letter at the end of the period, so that things can be further prolonged.

R: They do it, yes.

M: Does this process ensure fair competition between suppliers?

R: The conditions are the same for everyone. The prices are the same, so there's no way anyone can have higher prices, etc. Even in the municipalities that are poor and have no money, even there the payment is within the month for the social meals and the meals of the kindergartens, which are paid through the municipal budget. There it is within the month, you see, and here it is 4 months. This thing is nowhere to be found! Especially in such a difficult period.



R: Absolutely!

M: I have a few questions to all:

In your opinion, do the schemes contribute to increasing the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products among children or not?

R: I will answer you like this: in Sofia, 5 years ago, leading principal who appear on TV, were talking that children do not like milk and they will never consume it. This was the first year that there was a requirement to have at least one delivery of milk per month. It turned out that the children, when there is a proper packaging that is handy for drinking, and persistence, the same these principals, after 3 months, asked for 2 and 3 deliveries. The program has a very positive effect on the formation of children's habits.

R: Absolutely!

R: It is not by chance that it is said that there is food culture and it is cultivated. Yes, there are many things that children do not consume at home for various reasons, but we, by offering it in kindergartens, little by little, children accustomed to this varied diet and begin to accept different foods that are good for them. The food culture is cultivated and the schemes are good. It is just necessary some things to be looked at, to be refined and to identify what is not appropriate.

R: I want to add that details are very important and are stumbling blocks. In other schools, where it is given in milk pots, which is not typical, but the ordinance allows it, the children do not drink it.

R: Well, they won't drink it in pots!

R: Yes, because the child pours it over itself. In addition, the child cannot drink 250 ml at once or in one break, and when it is in a bottle, he puts the cap on and drinks it in the next break. These are the practical ones, but the price difference is more than BGN 0.20 per packing. You understand that this is a very sensitive difference, but the ordinance allows it.

R: Same with yogurt. We give spoons with the yogurt.

R: And the spoons are not included in the price.

R: That's exactly what I wanted to say, that they are nowhere included in the price, and they can't eat it without a spoon.

R: Here, because of this, the details are very important. These details should be reflected in the pricing. For example: we have perfect Bulgarian grapes without seeds, but you give them in a bag. Well, grapes becomes tasting like wine! We put them in a box and the children already like it a lot, but a box is BGN 0.15! Who pays for the box - no one! I'm talking about such details. Then you can assess more correctly the formation of the qualities and how the ordinance influences, but you have to create all the conditions. You can't give him a car without giving him the keys and telling him: "Have a ride!"

M: Okay. Other opinions? Do the schemes contribute to increasing the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products in children?



R: I will share in from the kindergarten's perspective. I am a working teacher in a group. Every morning since this program has been available, the children have been waiting with pleasure to be served a carrot, cucumber or milk, in the small packages, which is very practical. They build habits in this way and really expect it. The elder ones ask: "Won't there be a snack?" It is very appropriate. Let it not stop.

R: In fact, the consumption of fruits and milk products is really rising. These are more than 400 thousand children who participate in these schemes. The parents of many of them do not have the opportunity to afford milk products as per BDS.

R: Yes.

R: Not only the parents couldn't afford it. We, the kindergartens that are on a delegated budget and in the smaller towns and not having enough kids to have a bigger budget, we couldn't afford that kind of variety. We would hardly be able to meet all the norms 100% if it were not for these programs. They are a big help to our budgets. And apart from that there are all the benefits for the children in terms of the variety and the habits they get.

R: In this regard, I also want to support my colleague, that this helps a lot. And we are on a delegated budget, but why according to the ordinance of the Regional Health Inspectorate on weights (colleagues know what I'm talking about) some weights are required by the State Fund Agriculture and these schemes do not cover these weights? Only the cheese and yellow cheese cover the required weight. For milk - it is less. For fruits and vegetables, it is already different, because 300 g per day per child, which must be consumed, if it is a vegetable for us, it is fruit for them and vice versa. With milk, there have been cases where we have to give extra milk from our budget to reach the weight for the day. It would help tremendously if this weight under the scheme is increased so that the smaller kindergartens can be helped financially.

M: Do you mean the recommended daily intake?

R: Yes. The ordinance of the RHI, which their experts follow and check every day, to see how many grams per child we have given and how many we have not given. This is monitored continuously.

R: I will answer you because I have asked this question many times at meetings with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture. Their answer that this is a supplemental snack and is not intended to provide the full amount needed for the day. The portion is made based on what budget they had. This portion is agreed with the Ministry of Health and they say they have made the most rational dose. As for milk products, they have look to it that the budget per unit portion is comparable to that of fruits.

R: Yes, I agree. The Ministry of Health has also determined and agreed on the weight ordinance, but things are increased there.

R: There it is for the whole day.

R: Yes, but can you imagine how will the child take 250 ml of milk or yogurt at once at 10 o'clock? No way. That's why we divide it for the day. It is not used for other food or anything else, and it is divided for the day, because 250 ml of milk cannot be drunk in one go at 10 o'clock.



R: Your suggestion is that ...

R: That things be aligned with the RHI requirements for the weights of milk products. This will be a financial aid for the small kindergartens. In Sofia, the children are much more in a group, the kindergartens are much bigger and the budgets are very big, and they succeed, while in small towns it is very difficult.

R: This is exactly what the gentleman explained to you, that this is additional support, not the main one, so that's why their weights are smaller.

R: It is given separately from the main meals.

R: Yes. This is helpful for us, not a basis.

R: It will be helpful if you are given the weight for the day. It will be helpful exactly for those of you who have small kindergartens in a small town. We don't have this problem in Montana, but in the small towns they do. Talking to colleagues in other settlements, in meetings with them, they share that if it is increased, it will help them much more. At 10 o'clock, you give the entire amount of milk for the day that the State Fund Agriculture has allocated to you and the children drink it? This is a lie!

R: It is not given all at once.

R: Here, you divide it for the day.

R: Look, in Sofia the budgets are not big either, because there is no fee for the parents in Sofia.

R: There is no fee in the other places either.

R: There is no fee everywhere anymore.

R: Let's talk about the weight of the honey. It is given in small packages and the principals we work with have asked if it is not possible for it to be like milk. We're talking only about the kindergartens.

R: In jars.

R: Yes, because it is more convenient for the kindergarten. Although, it should be individual for each child, but they always say it to us as a recommendation because it makes it very difficult for them.

R: Yes, because with the hot food serving in the kindergartens, when the quantity is bigger, it is given on a slice, and in the small packaging ...

R: It must be separate from the main meals and cannot be spread on a slice, but they can put it in the tea or in the yogurt.

R: Yes, but you do understand how this honey is extracted, right?

R: Yes. That's why colleagues have asked. It's laborious.

R: Yes. A woman working in the kitchen starts emptying all the honey packages, one by one, into a jar to make it easier for them. This makes it more complicated.



R: That's because we have hot food service. It's not like in school, you give it to him and he throws it in his backpack.

M: What else can be done within the schemes to build more sustainable and healthy eating habits among children?

R: There must be accompanying schemes for which there shall be money as well, because in the beginning there was some budget set, but now there is none. For example: To take the children to a farm to see how the animals are raised, or to an orchard, or to a raspberry farm, to see first-hand how this thing is produced, to make some visual contact. We don't discover hot water. When we were children, they organized this for us at school and in the kindergartens. We used to go on brigades, on visits, etc., but for that you need a budget. We will not be in a pandemic forever so as the children not to be able to gather and travel.

There must be a practical focus, for which there is also a budget, not for drawings or something like that, but for something practically oriented. This is my opinion. I have conducted a survey with quite a few principals and they say it would have an effect. Some even do it at the parents' expense.

R: Our child was taken to Zemeneya dairy this year. That's right, yes. The lady organized it at the expense of the parents and they took the children to show them how it was done and even gave them something as a present.

M: To the representatives of educational establishments: are such accompanying measures organized at your place or only within the framework of the school or kindergarten?

R: There is no way to organize them, due to lack of such a budget. Our budgets are at a minimum. It is very good if you take part in innovative projects or programs and include the different professions. Then you're already doing it at your own expense, but there is no way of taking advantage of such a thing. Otherwise, it's very good, because my childhood also passed in the same way. I have seen how everything is done to get to the final product, which is very nice. Today's kids don't know that, unfortunately. All talks aside, it's all about finances. That's it.

M: Okay. Any other suggestions on how children's awareness and knowledge of foodstuffs can be raised?

R: I didn't understand you! If you can repeat!

M: Do you have any other suggestions that could be implemented within the scheme for activities that could help build more sustainable and healthy eating habits in children?

R: I think that the gentleman suggested enough good things.

M: Okay. Question to all: to what extent do school schemes contribute to promoting the distribution of local and regional agricultural products

R: Should we rate it as a percentage? They contribute. Moreover, there is a condition that they should be Bulgarian milk products and there shall be a percentage of Bulgarian fruits and vegetables, so that contributes. Now, as a percentage or how much it contributes, it would be difficult for us to estimate.

M: Okay.



Do you think the implementation of the school schemes helps the needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of children?

R: Definitely! When there are such children - yes.

M: In what way?

R: In such a way that there are children who cannot afford to buy milk in such packaging.

R: Or by BDS. Or organic.

R: Yes. You know that the disadvantaged parent will buy the cheapest, don't you? I am no exception either. So, it absolutely contributes.

R: I would make a proposal, which we addressed to the Ministry, but Momchil Neikov did not accept it again. After all, to expand the target group and to start in this direction, where the percentage of increase is not high, with nursery groups in kindergartens. They are not second rate children. We must not again create conditions for circumventing the requirements, because even at the moment the headmistresses who have such nursery groups cannot deprive these children. They are not orphans! When they see that the others are receiving, without being permitted by the ordinance, they set aside small quantities from the other children, so that the other children may try as well. Because of this, we think that it is possible to start step by step, and this does not require a budget, with the nursery groups. Then to increase it in the following grades and to reach the group that is allowed for assistance, which is up to the 7th grade by regulation. This state and this EU want to have a growing generation that is properly brought up and fed, and not some kind of loafers, but how do you imagine this will happen when in the first years you do not build food culture in them so that they can be convinced in it and can see it. Not through the home environment where parents may have some views and other parents can't afford it. The good thing here is that milk products are obligatorily the best. These are BDS products, i.e. they are produced only from milk using certain technologies. The fruits now are actually Bulgarian. The number of deliveries of organic fruits and organic products is increasing. The best possible food is chosen and this is how qualities are formed in children. How would he go to buy an organic product when he's 25 years old and until then he had not had the opportunity to try it and he says to himself, "How am I going to pay that much money when it's probably the same?!", but he has never tried it. You understand, don't you? Or, speaking of visiting farms and orchards, his friends say: "Leave these products!" Do you know what kind of junk they make them out of - nails, feet, etc.!. Well, when he goes to a farm, he sees how this milk is produced, or when he goes to a factory, as they went to Zemeneya, they see how it is made. This is the role of everyone and of this state. Given that we are spending billions on nonsense, what is the problem with allocating another 5-7 million for an entire state, which is nothing - 20 patched rural roads.

M: You partially answered also the question whether the choice of the children's target groups is appropriate? If you have other opinions, I'd be happy if you share them.

R: Groups should be increased. So there will be no cases of the headmistress having inadvertently failed to say what the number of children is and then we get fined. When the entire kindergarten is included, all the children are included in it and we supply for everyone. And first of all it has to start with the nursery groups.



M: Okay. Can we summarize what are the most important factors for building eating habits in children? We have already mentioned these ancillary activities. Can you think of anything else?

R: We've said it before: to make children want to try it. The first thing is that the product should have an appropriate packaging. You know, everywhere the problem is in the details. No one looks at them closely and that's why what you do as external evaluators is very good. For example: during the year to go and conduct a survey. In the first two years, in all kindergartens and schools, I used to send an inquiry to the class teacher to find out what they liked, what they wanted to change, etc. This is how you check whether you are moving in the right direction or not. I even submitted them to the Ministry at the time, so that they could see that they had a problem with the weight, the packaging, etc. They agreed with some things, but not with others. Such a thing should be done because it is necessary to analyze and draw lessons from this thing. Your meeting today is in the right direction, I hope.

M: Okay. What do you think are the products that should be distributed in the school scheme, given the children's need for healthy eating?

R: We do not have other milk products with proven qualities that are sufficiently popular and known among the population. Regarding fruits and vegetables, I said that blackberries, raspberries, blueberries should be included - these are useful and proven products, antioxidants, etc., and most importantly - they are tasty and Bulgarian. It is difficult to deliver an imported raspberry without it becoming watery, unless it is frozen and to you comply with the requirement for a Bulgarian producer.

R: I don't know if it will sound ugly coming out of my mouth, but there is a great discrepancy between the RHI regulations and the recipe book, which is new, because it offers some snacks that I, as an older lady, would not use, although it is useful, but you can't use it for financial reasons. I'm talking about the avocado with I don't know what, for example.

R: Yes. A typical Bulgarian product.

R: Now come! What is this avocado?

R: Or quinoa.

R: Or some muesli with I don't know what, invented by people who are not on Earth and not in Bulgaria, obviously.

R: They are on Earth, ma'am, it's just that there are other influencing factors - "stimulating", to include it. We have discussed in the Safety Council at the Ministry of Health and the bad thing is that these are leading respected professors who are...

R: Female professors who are quite old and did not grow up with such foods.

R: They did not grow up with such foods, but the incentives, both at pharmacies and at doctors, are many. I think I said it well enough.

R: Absolutely!

R: We, in our kindergarten, just skip the recipe book with this stuff because I can't afford to buy it and the kids, having never tried it, won't even try it.



R: They won't try it and it will be thrown away.

R: It will be thrown away and they will be hungry.

R: Not to mention how it was processed to have that durability, right?

R: Yes.

R: Some of the tangerines are yellow on the inside too, like the peel on the outside, which is an uncharacteristic color.

R: It should be emphasized on that above all. In the last questions that the lady asked and you joined in, the most important is this - the Bulgarian one. We are Bulgarians and no American cooks or imposes our cuisine. Or Asian or whatever.

R: We impose it, right.

R: Yes, showing something new is not bad, but imposing a total elimination of Bulgarian will be disastrous, and we are Bulgarians.

R: We eat Bulgarian cuisine at home. There is no need lying. We are ordinary people.

R: Exactly. With some dressing, with one good presentation, you can make the child try something different.

R: Exactly.

R: Look, the roots of a person and the climatic conditions where he was born are important and you can't... just like you can't bring a plant from Brazil and plant it in Bulgaria, because it cannot adapt. The ones that adapt and take root a very few. It is the same with man.

R: The emphasis should be on that.

R: That's exactly what I wanted to say. It is healthy to eat foods mostly from your latitude.

R: And not to introduce new recipe books with new things that at all ... I don't know .

R: Unfortunately, we are only one of the institutions that only perform.

R: Yes, I know.

R: It's the same with us with the new recipe book. I have even had a case with my friends, whose children are in other kindergartens, and they call me to ask me: "My children stopped eating in the kindergarten. Can you tell what's going on so that we know whether we should do and make a problem?". I tell them it's just that the recipes have changed and the kids don't want the new stuff. They need a lot of time to get used to it.

R: And if they offer it to me, I will also look at it strangely. The second time I might try it, but I might not like it.

R: Look, there are things that really take time to get used to. I, when we first gave wheat in our kindergarten, out of 100 children who were in the kindergarten at the time, only 3 ate. These 3 children said that they cook wheat at home. Currently, more than half of the children ask for extra when there is wheat. It's just that some things require persistence, but I also agree that there are things that are just insane.



R: Absolutely! It makes an impression on me that the yogurt, when it is a part of the children's daily meal, is mixed and made in ayrian. Ayrian, let's say, they drink, but when we received the single package of yogurt, with the spoon inside, I was amazed that the children ate their milk...

R: There, this is the small but important detail.

R:... which is a very good thing and I was amazed. Well, of course! His belly will be filled with 200 grams of milk, but milk is milk and eating it with a spoon is much better than stirring it like an Ayrian.

R: It is true, but it came to this not thanks to the Ministry of Health, but the European Commission, because there are products that are described in the "Milk" scheme, and only then did ours comply and reconfigure. That is why it is very important, you principals, to react and participate in discussions with the Ministry of Health, because three years ago, a colleague and I would have killed each other over this quinoa, etc. and the female professors almost accused us of being simple, of not understanding, etc., but explained that these are important things that increase health status - laughter in the hall!

R: Yes. We have ignored our beans and lentils, which are much more nutritious than chia, but it's more fashionable to eat chia rather than beans.

R: Yes.

R: Commoners eat beans.

R: No one thinks about it. In Bulgaria, as a member of the EU, we have much greater requirements for the pesticide rate, i.e. much more harmless. Everyone knows that spraying isn't as effective anymore, and that's because they're much weaker. This is for harmlessness. At the same time, we import products such as oil and wheat from Ukraine, which work with the old heavy preparations. In fact, it goes into the food, but no one from the institutions thinks about this thing.

R: Yes, unfortunately.

M: As you mentioned the European Commission, it occurred to me to ask you one more question: if this school scheme was not part of a larger EU scheme, would it have the same positive effect or not?

R: It would have had the same effect because no one cares that it is from Europe and is applied in several countries. 12-14 years ago, there was a deputy director of the State Fund Agriculture, with whom we lobbied to introduce this scheme, because we saw that it had been going on for a long time in European countries and the EU allocated funds. We used to say that we can't just pay our membership fees, we must also derive benefits from this membership. If you remember, they first started through the Ministry of Labor, where there was something like a Cup of Milk...

R: Yes, exactly.

R: What is important for the children is the impact on them and the financial incentive for school principals that this is not paid, and for kindergartens that this is additionally supportive. I think that this is the determining factor, not that it is applied in the Netherlands, in Germany and has been carried over.



R: I don't know how it is applied in the Netherlands or anywhere else, but in Germany the parent brings the child's food to the kindergarten.

R: See, the scheme is "School Milk". Here it is misconstrued and distorted. There it is only for milk and the purpose of this scheme abroad is, because of how their children develop with soft drinks and energy drinks, to be able to reduce or limit their use and so it's only milk there. The idea is quite different there.

R: Yes. It is everywhere according to the situation and the need.

M: Okay. I have two last questions. The first is related to the added salt and sugar in some of the products. Would minimum amounts of added sugar, salt or fat be allowed in the products given out?

R: There is currently no added salt and sugar anywhere.

R: That's what I was going to say.

R: There is no way to allow it in milk, there is no way to allow it in cucumber. They are fresh and natural.

R: There is a program in which the Ministry of Health has been participating for a long time, namely for the particularly harmful effect of salt, and not only for small children, but for everyone. It is for this reason that no salt or sugar is added to the products. I don't know which products you mean.

M: Generally.

R: There is only in cheese, which is an inseparable component, because otherwise it would last no more than 6-7 days, but there it is taken into consideration that the daily norm for a child is 2 g/day, which with a ration of 35 g according to the school scheme, is well below half, i.e. there is no problem.

M: We are talking about that whether it is permissible in cheese, yellow cheese and yogurt?

R: There is no sugar or salt in yogurt. There are only about 0.001% sugars contained in milk as a raw material.

M: Okay. Last: Do you have any recommendations that we didn't mention in the conversation?

R: I think that you will do a good job of analyzing and systematizing all the suggestions that I have already made.

R: Enough recommendations have been said so far.

R: The only thing that has come across as a problem over the years is that sometimes advantages are given and then more chaos is created. This year there were such again about fruits and vegetables. In my opinion, there should be fair competition and we should all be able to participate, whether we are traders, producers, dairies. We should all be able to participate equally and the principals themselves should decide who they are satisfied with. The principal is the one who can always replace you if he doesn't like something about the deliveries and the way a company works.



R: And, if you haven't understood, the proposal for fruits, for the rotation of Bulgarian fruits - 75% seems to me an unfeasible condition.

R: Isn't it 70%?

R: Well, even if it's 70%.

R: It is unfeasible.

R: Yes. It is good to keep it 50%.

R: I'm all for it too.

R: This is what everyone said at the working group with Momchil Neikov, but he did not take it into consideration.

R: Because we produce a lot, we should increase the percentage! Actually, in winter, apart from apples, there is nothing else Bulgarian.

R: The apples also are Macedonian.

R: And the principals tell me: "Don't give me more apples, because the children are already trembling from them!"

R: There are enough Bulgarian apples, but you can't give them apples constantly. In the worst case the product rotation shall be reduced. If 70% is required, then let it be 2 or 3 fruits, along with the vegetable. In the winter months it is impossible, because I am almost convinced what the prices will be, and they will still be impossible for tomatoes and cucumbers during the winter period.

R: Having such a requirement for 70%, their producers will raise them even higher. Let's say that he produces only apples, for example, and has 200 tons. He, by selling these 200 tons, should have enough for 15 deliveries, let's say, if he has to participate in the scheme later, he becomes a trader again, because he has to go and buy the rest of the products from somewhere...

R: Of course!

R: I am mainly talking about the priorities that have been discussed over the years. The other thing is that they are really unfulfillable. It is good to give Bulgarian stuff, but in the winter season it is either very expensive, or there is simply nothing Bulgarian to supply except apples.

R: This is the main recommendation: either the percentage or the rotation of the products to be reduced. Then, all the indignation of the parents that mainly apple is given, should not be towards the suppliers, but towards those who introduced it - the Ministry.

R: Yes, because it comes to us like a boomerang. Principals and parents are dissatisfied that we supply only apples and there is no variety.

R: I know that one product should not be repeated in a month.

R: No. The fruits are four right now.

R: No. There must be four different ones.



R: Yes, but not exactly, because when the month of October begins, there are still grapes, there are pears that are not so durable. Why start with apples, knowing that there will be more apples in the next season? Let more seasonal fruits be given.

R: Look, to begin with, we harvest a lot of grapes in October and November, but they start grumbling also about the grapes...

R: When you overdo on something, it's never OK.

R: Yes, but also four different ones must be made. What shall we deliver if we start from September 15th...

R: Since October, because since September 15th we have not specified the numbers yet.

R: There are companies that also start in September, but let's say you start in October and you start with grapes, cucumber, apple, pear, and you've made four.

R: Well, yes.

R: If they introduce this 70%, only apples will be eaten.

R: Even now they only eat apples.

R: There is no way with four-fruit rotation.

R: There is no way we can provide these four products. For example: January you have 10 deliveries and of these 10 deliveries you have 4 organic...

R: But the organic ones are apples too.

R: Exactly.

R: We have a practice of bringing in organic oranges sometimes, because we cannot find enough Bulgarian organic products, which makes things even more difficult, because our Bulgarian products are decreasing and we cannot catch up. And with this 70% it's just ... impossible.

R: Well, out of 10 deliveries in January, 7 are apples and 3 are something else. This will happen with this 70%.

R: Yes.

R: Orange, tangerine and banana.

R: Perhaps, it should have been started in stages. Let's first see how it goes with 60% and only then 70%, possibly. We offered it, but Momchil Neikov wanted even 100%.

R: The idea to have 100% Bulgarian stuff is very good, but let it be considered whether it is possible and whether it is realistic.

R: Moreover, a tomato for school is not applicable.

R: And the cucumber is not.

R: Yes.

R: When we take a large cucumber and cut it in two, they ask: "Why did you cut it?" and if we don't cut it: "This big cucumber, what should this child do with it?" and it becomes...



R: Because of this, last year we had cucumber once and carrot once.

R: The carrot is not applicable either.

R: It is not in school, but in kindergarten - it is.

R: It is applicable in the kindergarten and the children like it a lot, by the way.

R: They like carrot and cucumber very much. It is very nice to make a salad for the child and give it to him, but the suppliers take large quantities for school and for kindergartens, they do not care at all that in the kindergarten something is more applicable than in school.

R: The idea is that since we are making one schedule which is followed together, if we have to supply apples in the schools and carrots in the gardens, it will be even more complicated...

R: Yes, it's not good for you.

R: That's why this is so.

R: But, why do you include the fruits in advance in the schedule? I just mention the dates and nothing else. What I can...

R: And we point out. I said that at the beginning of the conversation.

R: This is exactly what was said at the beginning of the conversation, and I asked if it was possible to have the fruit or vegetable written, but the reason was explained to me...

R: Yes. I told you that we give them 2 weeks in advance so as to be known. Everyone practices in a different way now.

R: Yes.

M: Okay. Thank you very much! You were extremely thorough and helpful! We will have 5 more similar discussions with representatives of the other planning districts, so I hope that very valuable and in-depth analysis will be obtained. Thank you again and I wish you a nice day and success in everything!

R: We hope that with these 5 discussions, you will not miss the period so that you can be useful to the scheme as well, not losing the opportunity for a change in this year's scheme.

R: That's what I was going to say too. I hope these talks are timely and have the necessary effect!

M: Thank you! Have a nice day!

R: Good day to everyone!

R: Have a nice summer!

R: You too!

7.3.2 North Central Region, 07.12.2022

M: If you wish, you can introduce yourself very briefly, you don't need to mention the organization or school you represent, just your name and how long you have been a party to the school schemes.



R: Hello! My name is N.N. and I have been a stakeholder in the schemes since the inception of the schemes.

M: Thank you!

R: Hello! My name is N.I. and I have been a stakeholder in the school schemes for 10 years. I am a supplier under them.

M: Thank you!

R: Hello! I am P.M. from Emilian Stanev Secondary School in Veliko Tarnovo. We have been participants in this program for several years, we have observations and we will have suggestions, of course.

M: Great! Thank you!

R: Hello! I am T.T. and I am the principal of a kindergarten from Gabrovo town. We have been working on the schemes since their inception - for 10 years already.

M: Okay, thank you! It seems that we don't hear each other with V. Do we hear each other with N.? No.

I suggest that we start with the lineup we are in. For those who write in the chat, they can answer there. It would be better if we could hear each other, but that is also an option.

I have general questions to all and questions to the educational establishments or to the providers themselves. Let's start with the suppliers.

Can you tell me if the information you had about the schemes before you applied was sufficient? Was it sufficient, were the conditions and criteria clearly specified?

R: If it is about the last application, which was now in May, the conditions should be the same as last year, but we have information that the program will be changed. Much more deliveries of organic fruits and vegetables will be included, and deliveries of Bulgarian fruits and vegetables will become 70% of the total number of deliveries.

M: My question is, is the documentation itself clear and understandable?

R: Yes. It is clear and understandable. We have been aware for years now..

M: Okay. To the principals, rather to the representatives of educational establishments: have you received any more specific guidance on the application of the specific health requirements when distributing the products under the scheme ?

R: I have no information about specific requirements from the inspections that were carried out by the health authorities or by the BFSa, but I am sure that all requirements are met. I don't think it has been found to have any special prescriptions or requirements. I have no such information.

M: Okay. Are the parents familiar with the schemes? How does the information reach them and do you get any feedback from them?

R: Information reaches parents very directly, very quickly. We have great communication with them in all possible electronic ways, given the past few years in online environment, such as



training. We also get feedback, of course. Sometimes there are negative reactions to the delivery of some products, such as yellow cheese or some cheeses, which are adapted to the children's age and weight, but create a slightly negative impression with their size. Therefore, we prefer, and we have had no complaints and negative reactions when milk is provided to children. Therefore, considering the opinion of the parents, our proposal is to avoid offering yellow cheeses and cheeses, because they may be according to the norm, but they seem small in quantity and we prefer them to be milk.

M: That is, their size is unpleasantly small, right?

R: Apparently they look small, although according to the requirements they correspond to weight and any other qualities. The fact that they look small sets the stage for negative comments from parents. We are sure they are wrong, but when we offer milk under this program, we do not have such negative reactions.

M: Okay, thank you! The other representatives of educational establishments, do you receive feedback from parents and how are they informed about the schemes? Who will answer?

R: I am a supplier.

M: Okay. And Hristo Botev Primary School?

R: Do we hear each other?

M: Yes, we do.

R: Since the principal has another engagement, I will substitute him. We had a little problem with the microphone so I joined the chat.

M: I'm glad you fixed the problem. Can you tell if you get any feedback from parents?

R: Yes. At parent meetings, already at the beginning of the school year, we make them familiar with the schedule, the method of distribution and where the fruits and yogurt will be given. For absent students, they are left in the refrigerator for the next day. Parents are familiar with all this. If there is an absent student also the next day, we decide and give to a needy student. We have such socially weak students and we give it to the older students so that the fruit or milk is not wasted.

M: Okay. And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and milk products?

R: Yes. In the activities of interest of the groups in case of all-day organization of the school day, there are such topics, where the colleagues hold discussions, have healthy eating drawing, make boards. The posters provided by you are also in the dining room.

M: Okay. And the others?

R: I can also confirm that in the activities of interest children learn about the benefits and necessity of healthy eating. In addition, we have project activities that are related to this way of eating. We are working under the Erasmus+ project on the topic "The responsibility to actively treat nutrition as a European value". This activity is promoted in school, photo exhibitions are prepared and the project activity is presented. Besides, thanks to other companies and various



external structures, we get children acquainted not only with healthy eating, but also with good oral hygiene care. Twice a year we conduct such actions with provision of sanitizing materials, so this is a comprehensive process, and not episodic and related only to the work in one direction, i.e. eating milk products and fruits.

M: Okay. Now to the suppliers, which are two as I far as I understand. Could you tell us what is your company's mechanism for selection of products that you distribute in the educational establishments and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: The mechanisms I use for fruits are that before I buy the fruits, I personally go to every single producer of Bulgarian goods or to an importer, if it is about the imported goods, I examine everything and then I buy it. I always have to see first what quality and what size it is. I look at the product with my eyes, and I don't rely on words. With milk and milk products, over the years we have seen which producers are more preferred in the places where we work, because there are some yogurts that are a little more sour, others are sweeter. From the principals, teachers and housekeepers of schools and kindergartens themselves, we get the information about what was liked, actually. If a brand is not liked, we change it until we find one that is liked.

M: Okay. N., for you, what are the mechanisms for selecting products and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: We have been working with one and the same Bulgarian producers for many years. Over the years, we have become convinced of their quality and we see that they are always local and in the region, in order to stimulate Bulgarian production in the region. For milk and milk products, we have focused on larger producers, because the very production of such small packages according to the scheme, can be made by large companies. We work with two of them and alternate them, because, as the colleague said, for some yogurt is more sour, and we alternate them, according to the wishes of the directors of the educational establishments.

M: Does the price influence the product selection?

R: Of course, because we are working to make some profit, after all.

M: Have you ever exchanged a product for another because of its price? For example: Bananas are more expensive in winter, so you prefer apples?

R: Look, since according to the requirement 50% must be from a Bulgarian producer, and in the winter there is nothing else to be delivered, except apples, the children themselves get a little fed up and prefer bananas and oranges. That's it. Plus, by regulation there is a requirement that the fruits in the month should be four different ones. It can't be just a banana or just an apple.

M: And how would you rate the process of reimbursement of eligible costs?

R: What exactly do you mean?

M: The whole process.

R: If I have to compare with colleagues, who are for applicants in Sofia schools and kindergartens, our costs are much higher. I will give an example of a school in Sofia. The target group is 500 children, and for 500 children I have to travel 300 km and drive around one municipality to reach the number. My expenses are much higher than theirs and it is not equal. In Sofia, the goods



from Greece, such as tangerines, bananas and oranges, have a much different price. By the time it comes to my region, through resellers, it becomes completely different. Our costs do not match.

M: Okay. N., do you have anything to share about the process of reimbursement of your expenses?

R: It has changed over the years. For the current year, I can say that everything is fine. They reimburse us on time, and one month they even started to refund our costs before the deadline. I am also in a region where for 500 children I do 250-300 km, as the colleague said. It is the same with goods. Those who work in the Sofia region work much easier - their prices are different, their kilometers are fewer. That's it.

M: Do you think that the chosen approach ensures fair competition between suppliers?

R: I can't really say. In some respects, those of us who work outside the big cities have pretty good access to producers, and that's better for us. In terms of fruit that is imported, the bigger cities that are importers are better off even in this way.

M: Okay.

R: I just can't understand what you mean by "chosen approach"

M: Whether the selection criteria and the whole process of choosing a supplier and the peculiarities.

R: The big citrus suppliers we buy from are quite aware of the schemes and there is no fair competition. They are familiar with the amounts paid to us by the educational establishments. They know very well.

M: That is, they deliberately set prices that leave you with a small profit?

R: Exactly. It is the same with organic producers in Bulgaria. They are very aware of the amount we receive per child and set prices for us that are not very fair, since they offer the same product at twice lower price. At least I have such information. That is, we have no fair competition.

M: In general, is the amount you receive per child or per product enough to cover your expenses?

R: It is sufficient to cover the expenses, but kind of compensation is obtained. In reality, in big cities the numbers are much higher and the cost is lower. It compensates the small municipalities where there are more sites, the numbers are fewer and the costs are higher. The other thing is that since one year the prices went up, but the prices were fixed when the program started. The prices for the upcoming school year are determined in September. Well, if cucumbers become BGN 7 in March, and they pay them to us at BGN 2-3, fixed in September, how can we supply cucumbers?

M: And how are you dealing with this problem right now?

R: We have not delivered cucumbers. Simply, in order to comply with the condition for 50% Bulgarian fruits and vegetables, one of our deliveries was "at a loss".



M: We had another group discussion earlier in which rising inflation and the fact that there is no change in the amount you are paid were raised as a problem. They mentioned that some suppliers find some "loopholes".

R: Yes, there are such too. With documents.

M: Or with less weight. Or they make one delivery for all the fruits for the month. Have you heard of such cases?

R: There are probably colleagues who make one delivery and save money. I can't. Even the more remote regions get fruit twice a week and the get milk and milk products on two separate days of the week, although the program allows fruit and milk to be delivered on the same day.

M: Okay. Now I have questions to all and I'm going to ask you to join in so we can gather different opinions. For us, as an external evaluator, it is important to gather as many opinions as possible.

In your opinion, do the schemes contribute to increasing the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products among children or not?

R: Given that we are educational establishments, and we aim not only to educate, but also to upbringing children, I think that these schemes for supply of milk products and fruit are extremely useful, although the opinion of parents is ambiguous. We see what snacks some parents send their child or what lunch they put in their box if they eat food from home, but the opinion of the parents in our school is almost 100% that it has a positive effect. The very act of offering and holding the fruit and milk in the child's hand, especially when it is in an attractive form and looking clean, wrapped and fresh, is a prerequisite for the child to eat it. Even if he doesn't eat it right away, he will put it in its bag or backpack and take it home to eat later. I believe that this, in addition to being useful, also has an educational effect. In this way, we justify the parents' expectations that we replace some gaps in the upbringing of children in a home environment and that the school compensates for this. I am wholeheartedly in favor of continuing to provide milk products and fruit to children in this way.

M: And what else could be done to increase consumption of these products within the schemes?

R: I cannot say now, apart from what we have said that they shall be attractive in appearance, they shall look fresh clean and colorful. This is interesting in children's eyes. To increase advertising on television and other media, as well as the Internet advertising of such useful products, because the healthy way of living and eating is pushed aside a bit.

M: Okay. I will enumerate several factors that may positively or negatively affect the implementation of the scheme. Could you share to what extent they have influenced the fulfillment of the scheme's objective, which is to increase the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products by children. Does the administrative management of the school scheme help to fulfill this objective? Is the selection of children's target groups correct? Should it be expanded?

R: In many other European countries that participate in the scheme, the target group is much wider and is up to and including the 7th grade. I think that if the target group is expanded, it would contribute to improving the children's habits even more. Regarding the administration, do you mean our relationship with the State Fund Agriculture?



M: Yes.

R: I have always received assistance from the local unit of the State Fund Agriculture. I haven't had any problems there.

M: Okay.

R: In my opinion, the selection of children's target groups should be expanded. Especially in the kindergartens in smaller settlements, where the groups are mixed, they have some minor problems, such as the fact that the children in the nursery groups do not get and unpleasant situations occur.

In terms of building eating habits, I think it is good to be until the 7th grade, as the colleague said. Let the other children also receive, because they walk and eat in the corridors, and the others see. It becomes more difficult for the school authorities themselves to explain why there is for some and not for others. That's the least. Eating habits are another issue. All principals share that they willingly eat things, be it fruit or milk products. It is okay for both older and younger children to receive products.

M: Okay. Is that so, Mr. E.? Do you have to explain to older children why they didn't get food?

R: No. They haven't inquired about that because they didn't lack food, basically. Given that we are a school and our goal is different from promoting any kind of products and goods, I think it is good to focus on the healthy lifestyle and diet. It would be a good idea if there was an opportunity to offer such milk products and fruit to older students as well, but this needs to be considered and discussed at a wider level. Every school is different, given the regions in which we live. In a school with 100 children, it will be perceived in one way, and with 1500, as it is with us, it will be in another way. It would be good, but the attitudes of the parents and the people of the area should also be studied. Serious thought should be given to this matter before a decision is made.

M: Okay, thank you! Regarding the types of products that are selected and described in the Ordinance on the distribution, do you think that the selection is sufficiently varied? Do other products need to be included as well as some that already exist to be replaced? You already shared about the yellow cheese and cheese, but what would the others say? Is the selection of products appropriate?

R: Since the program started in September, some of the mentioned products are impossible to deliver, such as cherries and apricots.

M: They are rather seasonal.

R: Yes. It is very difficult to find them in the period September-May.

M: I think that cherries have long since dropped from the program.

R: Yes. Let's say peaches then. Only one deliver of peach can be made in the month of September. Plus, they are a commodity that is very delicate and spoils very quickly. Purchasing them, we do not give them on the same day, anyway.

M: Yes. What would be your suggestion for the products? What would be the easiest for you, as a supplier, besides apples?



R: Besides apples, there are also pears, if we are talking about Bulgarian ones. And grapes in October. I even attended a meeting where Bulgarian producers were invited to say whether they could provide pears for the entire period after December, and it turned out that they could provide only and exclusively apple and greenhouse cucumber in the March-April period. I'm not talking about tomatoes at all, because children in kindergartens and schools use them for other purposes.

M: For what purposes?

R: They aim at each other and clog the toilets. They are not suitable as a product. For kindergartens - yes. Maybe things should be separated somehow.

M: Okay, thank you! N., What attitude do you have to the products that are offered under the scheme? Should some be removed and others added?

R: For removal, I wouldn't say that some should be removed. Some should be added. Over the years we've seen that there was kiwi and grapefruit. I've tried grapefruit, but kids don't like it very much because it's a relatively sour fruit. Kiwi is accepted in kindergartens, but in schools it is very difficult because it has to be peeled and cut. We don't have much of a choice. Just there are months in which it is very, very difficult to do the four fruits.

R: Yes, exactly.

R: With a concession on our part and on the part of the schools, it is possible. Especially January-March are very difficult. If the new regulation to have 70% Bulgarian fruit comes into effect, the implementation will be almost on the border of the impossible.

R: I agree too.

R: Or children should eat mainly apples. Until December there may also be pears, which are not always nice. Sometimes they are very hard and not sweet, and children prefer sweet fruits.

R: That's right, yes.

R: This is the truth and I don't know if there are any other fruits that can be included. There are simply no other fruits. Perhaps the only thing that can be done on this matter is not to have 4 different fruits in the winter months, but 3, in the regulation. Anyway, kids will still get mainly apple, pear, banana, orange and tangerine.

R: Just to add about the tangerine. The regulation states that the minimum weight is 160 grams. I have never seen such a tangerine anywhere.

R: It is written that it can be also 2 tangerines.

R: Yes, but sometimes it's hard to find even two that fit into that 160 g.

R: I find, but it is very sour. It is a Turkish mandarin and it is not liked. There shall be between 2 and 3 of the Greek sweet mandarin per child.

R: Exactly.



M: In the previous group, some suppliers said that in the winter months they are even at a loss in relation to the scheme because in order to meet this condition of 4 different fruits, they have to buy fruits that are out of season and are more expensive. Is this the case with you?

R: That's right.

R: Absolutely!

R: Especially in winter, when there is also snow, our own costs are much higher for fuels, we have months where we do not have good profitability.

M., what do you think about the products - are they enough, as a variety, or do you have a suggestion for some others? Blackberries, raspberries and blueberries were mentioned in the last discussion.

R: We are happy with the products our kids get with the slight remark that I made about the yellow cheese and cheese. We do not have any suggestions due to dissatisfaction. Everything is fine. Moreover, we work with a supplier who is experienced and very flexible in communicating with us and is quick to respond. I don't have any other suggestions.

M: Okay. What, in your opinion, are the most important factors for building eating habits in children?

R: One of the important factors is the personal example they can see in families and at school. We cannot influence the families, but here, within the school, we can. As I mentioned earlier, getting children to have good health habits and trying to educate them in a healthy lifestyle is not a one-sided and cyclical process, but should be constant. This is what we try to do here. Every single form related to the promotion of ecology, love for animals, for cleanliness, for friendly relations and pure human relations, are a plus for bringing up children in kindness, in virtues, in a good habit of accepting clean Bulgarian food and being careful what and when they eat. I think the program is a good example of what should be done with little students. The big ones, at one point, are very influenced by the internet, by the ads they see on electronic media and platforms. They communicate online and very often good and healthy food is something that is far away from them and they don't pay enough attention to it. Little children from 1st to 4th grade are at an appropriate age to teach that it is important what we eat and when we eat it.

M: Okay. This program is partially financed by the EU and the state budget. Would this program have been so widespread and successful if it wasn't for the support of the EU, would it even exist?

R: I can't decide, to be honest. I am not an expert in this regard, but I think that any promotion of such programs is important and a must.

M: In your opinion, what educational measures among children should school schemes cover?

R: They are popularized, at least at us, but such happenings can be held with the participation of parents, with the participation of companies from the region involved in this program, where they can present their products. Something like that. Some out of school meetings with producers of milk and milk products will certainly be interesting for children. It would be a good idea to involve the parents as well. The parent community is very important.



M: Okay. I want to ask one last question. Would you make any recommendations that we haven't mentioned so far in the conversation about improving the delivery of school schemes?

R: The payments. These payments 3 months after the first request that we submit to the State Fund Agriculture is quite a long period during which the difficulty is great for us. Especially now, the costs will become much higher with the high price of gasoline and diesel. It results in closing of a lot of money, which makes the whole process difficult. Payments can be made earlier.

If it really comes to 70% of Bulgarian fruits and vegetables, the requirement for at least 4 fruits should be dropped, because it will become absolutely impossible to fulfill this requirement.

M: Why is this 70% so scary?

R: Because the number of deliveries is 50 throughout the school year. 35 of them must be from Bulgarian producers. How will the requirement of 4 different fruits be met in the month of January? What Bulgarian can be given, except an apple? I don't see what. If you make an average of 7 deliveries per month, 5 of them must be from a Bulgarian producer.

M: Are these your only concerns?

R: Yes.

M: And is the price for Bulgarian producers different than for foreign ones?

R: Not so much the price as the quality.

M: Which is better?

R: The Polish apple is better than the Bulgarian one. It has a wonderful look, there is no big - small. We also have to respect weight, and you can't give one child 100 g and the other 180 g.

The other is for organic supplies. There we also have two big producers in the entire country who want to twist our arms. There, the funds are much greater, and this year it is expected that the directors of the educational establishments will not be able to pay for their fuel and there will be another shutdown, again we will not be able to make the deliveries in November, when there is a greater opportunity to deliver fruits and vegetables from Bulgarian producers. It seems to me that we will be closed again in November and we will again have to shift our supplies to May, when it is very difficult to find quality Bulgarian goods, except for cucumbers.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: I fully support N. in what he said. He said everything I was thinking. I have nothing else to add. This is the reality.

M: Okay. P., any last recommendations?

Okay. Thank you very much! Even with such a reduced lineup, you managed to be comprehensive enough for us to have material, so to speak. I wish you success in everything and see you again!

R: Merci!

R: Thank you! See you again!



7.3.3 Northeast Region, 13.07.2022

M: If you want, you can also introduce yourself briefly with your name and how long you have been a stakeholder in the school schemes.

We can start with the ladies. J., do we hear each other? Obviously not. A.?

R: Hello to everyone! I am a representative of a company that makes deliveries under the School Fruit and School Milk schemes. We have been a supplier for seven years now, but we are also a producer of fruits and vegetables.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! Hello to the colleagues! My name is M.S. In addition to being producers, we are also suppliers from the first day of the program for the town of Varna and the region

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Thank you for the meeting! Let's hope that there will be a reaction and let's hope that your colleagues from the State Fund Agriculture, on whom it depends, will hear what our opinion is. There were some meetings held the first years. They had two meetings - one in St. Zagora or in Tarnovo and the second in Sofia. Our proposal that there shall be audibility. We will tell each other our problems and hopefully they will hear them. We keep our fingers crossed that we will soon have acts of approval to start the new season.

M: Okay, thank you! S.B.?

R: Hello! We have been suppliers under the school schemes for ten years. Let's see now what the purpose of this meeting will be and what we can say. I'll be following closely.

M: Okay, thank you! One participant remains. Do you hear me?

R: My name is S.S. We are a supplier under the school schemes. Indeed there are problems. Let's hope that this discussion and the presentation of our problems will have an outcome that will be good for all.

M: Okay, thank you! Z., do we hear each other already?

R: Hello! I am a primary school representative. I'll hear what it's about.

M: Okay, thank you! I suggest that we start with this lineup, and the ladies from the kindergartens will hopefully be able to join at some point.

I will address the suppliers and ask you: how would you rate the documentation we have at the beginning when you applied? Is it understandable? Are the criteria and deadlines appropriate? How would you rate the entire pre-launch documentation process and what could be changed?

R: Every year we hear the same thing from our colleagues from Sofia, that everything will be done in such a way that it will become much easier, much faster and all kinds of promises about how nice it will be and how easy it will be to work. In spite of all this, it becomes more and more difficult because at the last minute they send each other the documents for the requests for payments and for any requests for participation. They always send them to us at the last minute.



The second problem is that according to the Ordinance, they have to adjust our prices twice a year. Especially in the this coming year, with this inflation that is unpredictable, we will insist on having at least two price updates, because no one can tell us what will be the cost of electricity, of transport, of gas and all these things. When they start giving prices, I don't know where they get them from, but every time it's some kind of nightmarish story - we start the program and we don't have prices! We should have prices at the beginning of September.

M: When do they give you these prices?

R: At the end of September. Or, a month has already passed with deliveries, and on the second month they give us what the documents for the payment application will be. The same thing happens every year. Now, you cannot buy bananas for BGN 2.50 and be paid BGN 2.30. You can't buy grapes for BGN 3 and be paid BGN 2.50, because they decided so and you were working during that time. I give these only as examples.

M: Yes. We will comment on this with the prices a little later in the conversation. Now, I would rather like to talk about the documentation itself.

R: Every year they come up with something. We are also producers and especially this year we had several times... Because we buy the organic fruits from a group of producers who are registered and they know them, but "we don't know them and we want a declaration from whom they bought it". You have documents and everything, right?! Such seemingly stupid things that delay payments for 10 days. They had started paying within 2 months and now it's going to 3 months again.

With their computer specialists, we manage to handle, more or less, these requests, but we have to have the prices on time. We cannot do business and not know what we will get in return. This is our great wish. This year they were talking about 35 deliveries, but whether they accepted it or not, it didn't appear anywhere.

M: Okay. The rest, how would you rate the whole application process, getting to know the rules, the feedback?

R: Regarding all the application documents and the whole procedure, I haven't had any difficulties or problems. No, it is not easy and there are a lot of documents to collect, but things are simple and elementary I personally have no difficulty with the application. It's the easiest part of the whole process.

M: Okay. The rest of you, do you have a different opinion?

R: I am of the same opinion. Rather, the frequent changes in the Ordinance that have occurred in recent years have created extreme pressure, both in reporting and in application. In the current version of the Ordinance, each of the colleagues manages to handle both the preparation of applications for approval and the reporting documents.

M: Okay. Can you tell me whether parents are aware of the schemes and how the information about the implementation of the schemes reaches them? Do you get any feedback from them?

R: Parents are made familiar with the schemes at the beginning of the school year at the parent meetings. All class teachers are familiar with the programs in advance and they give them



sufficiently comprehensive information. They can get feedback on what fruits and vegetables they get, and what milk products they get only from the children. So far, we have never had a parent come and ask: “But what exactly will be there this month?” because we get the schedules when and what will be delivered to us. There is always feedback, if anyone wants it, but they know very well that we work under this scheme School Fruit and School Milk. Every year they ask if there will be any this year.

M: Is there, in your opinion, anything that should be changed or improved in terms of the communication between parents and schemes?

R: I, as a parent, get the feedback from my child when I am interested. I don't think parents have no feedback. There are quite a few parents who are interested in what exactly their children eat for breakfast at school, and I guess they know. If there is any problem, they immediately turn to us, but so far it has not happened to us.

M: And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and milk products organized in schools ?

R: Such are organized at the form tutor's class to get familiar with healthy foods.

M: And are trainings organized for the teachers and employees in the educational establishment who are involved in the implementation of the schemes?

R: In general, only one person is involved in the implementation of the schemes in a school. This is me. The teachers have no commitment other than to get their fruits, vegetables and dairy products to distribute to the children.

M: Now again I would like to turn back to the suppliers. Could you tell me what is your company's mechanism for selection of products that you distribute in the educational establishments and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: If you allow me, before answering this question, to comment something about the pedagogical measures and the familiarization of the parents with the program?

M: Yes.

R: I think that it is very important that parents are aware of the main goals of this program and the supplies we provide. The main one is building healthy habits in children. Many of the parents consider that these products are given only to feed the children and are part of their daily or afternoon snack. Through us, this information cannot reach the parents. It is good educational establishments to provide this information at the beginning of the school year. We need to talk about it in order to achieve the objectives of the program. In addition to all pedagogical measures, it should also be in the form of activities, games, coloring and stories. We provide such to the educational establishments so that they can more easily deal with the implementation of these pedagogical measures, and many colleagues do it, I suppose, but it is not enough. It really has to be talked more about the need to consume these products that we are supplying.

M: How do you think this could happen?



R: In my opinion, there should be a budget that schools can use to implement more effective pedagogical measures. There are such developed in the Ordinance, but actually they cannot be implemented.

M: Why cannot they be implemented?

R: Because there is no established system for funds to be used for such purposes. Farm visits could be made, but all this is related to funds, and schools do not have the opportunity to initiate such events with their own funds.

Regarding the products, I can say that the leading factor for us is that the products are of Bulgarian origin. After that, they have to comply with the requirements of the State Fund Agriculture for diversity, purity of supplies. These are the two main criteria by which we choose the products. And maximum variety.

M: Are all your products from a Bulgarian producer, because as far as I know there is a certain percentage?

R: Many of the products, such as banana and citrus, the fact that they are not Bulgarian does not make them inappropriate or should remain in the background. On the contrary, children prefer consuming bananas and citrus fruits, so we take this into account, but give priority to the Bulgarian product. In any case, seasonality does not make it possible to offer Bulgarian products throughout the year, and we try to give everything on the list of the State Fund Agriculture.

M: Okay. The rest, what is your mechanism for choosing the products you distribute in the educational establishments?

R: Practice shows two things: you do your best to make 4 products a month, but we have to respect the Bulgarian products as well. After October, only apples and pears remain from the Bulgarian products. We cannot even touch the cucumbers because the prices are unique. Tomatoes - either. Market prices also determine our choice of products that we give them. I think that all colleagues will agree with this thesis. If the prices are made twice and adjusted, we will be able to give them everything else. We cannot give them a carrot at a price we cannot buy it for. We cannot give them plum for the same reason. They deliberately, with the prices they announce, they eliminate these two products.

There is one thing I am very happy about. The first years we gave them carrots. My grandson learned to eat carrots whole. When I visit him, he says: "Grandpa, give me a whole carrot! That is how I eat it." So, we taught the children! Now it is a matter of keeping them and keeping the program from falling apart with these constant changes in the ordinances. We "married" the schools three times for 3 years each and one more time each year for 1 year. This is said in another way, but unfortunately it is true. You cannot plan anything. What else can we give them? We have to make 25 Bulgarian products and now I do not know if they accepted this proposal for 35. Has anyone heard from the colleagues?

M: I, since I have already had two similar discussions, I heard from your colleagues from other parts of Bulgaria that they are quite worried about this change for 75% of the products to be Bulgarian. What do you think?



R: Well, they will get tired of Bulgarian apples, but there is nothing else. We cannot give them Bulgarian cucumbers, at 4 BGN wholesale price, and they pay us for it 3.50 BGN. This cannot happen! The price adjustment should be at least twice and it should be clear that these are the winter prices and these are the summer prices. There is no way to give them Bulgarian tomato and Bulgarian cucumber at these prices. And this year they will be even higher. This is what I mean about the way product types are defined. We do our best to make it 4 types. Now, we send tomatoes to the kindergarten, but if we send to the school, we will be kicked out immediately. It is good that they changed the Ordinance and we do not have to peel cucumbers anymore, because that was complete madness.

The bad thing is that no one asks us. This meeting that you have initiated, we welcome it, but there should be regular meetings, as they used to do, and as stipulated in the Ordinance that the Ministry of Agriculture should organize meetings of suppliers under these programs. There were only two meetings. Let there be meetings every year, because there we can state our proposals and sometimes they hear them and correct things.

M: Okay, thank you! S., for you, what is the mechanism for choosing products and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: I have nothing new to add to what my colleagues said, given that we have a precise criterion and exact things laid down in the Ordinance, regarding variety, types of fruits. The only thing that depends on me is to choose the fruits so that they are of good quality. I comply with the diversity. I comply with the prices given by the Agriculture State Fund, as very often, in order not to compromise on quality, I also take fruits that are priced close to that of the State Fund Agriculture and more expensive. It happened more than once or twice. It happened quite often to buy something at a price of BGN 2.70, and the State Fund Agriculture to pay BGN 2.50 for it, so that children can receive quality food. I do not make compromises with this, because our children eat them, after all, but the State Fund Agriculture has not considered this well. For me, first of all, foods must be of good quality. If someone is not satisfied with something and has a problem, I replace it.

M: The last representative, could you also tell us what your product selection mechanism is?

R: Yes. Product quality comes first. Diversity is mandatory to be observed under the ordinance. As far as I understand, the proposal is for 70% Bulgarian fruits. If so, I agree with colleagues that children will know indeed what an apple is. From kindergarten to 4th grade, they will be introduced to all types of Bulgarian apples, unfortunately.

The problem is the prices. They have always been. I, like my colleague, have bought at a higher price in order for the children to be fed with quality vegetables and fruits. In the last year, due to the number of deliveries of Bulgarian fruit, I had to finally buy a cucumber, which the State Fund Agriculture had already paid me at a much lower price. This is a problem with every single provider. We share it with you so that our opinion is heard, and we hope for some adequate counter-actions and measures.

M: And how often does it happen that you are at a loss?

R: It is very exaggerated to say we are “at a loss”, because considering all the deliveries we make, the fact that we have made one or two deliveries below the price does not mean that we are at a



loss, but it is not right and it is not correct. At the end of the day, we are all working to deliver quality and good fruits, and it is better to profit a little than to lose, because this year the prices will be very high indeed. As the colleague also said, if the prices of the State Fund Agriculture come out too late, it may indeed turn out that we start the year with negative results.

M: Okay. To what extent does the price influence the choice of products for distribution?

R: Quality comes first. The prices of the products are relevant and more or less the same. There is not much variation across providers. I am very satisfied with the supplier. Everything has always been of very high quality. The price has always been such that it suited me. The exception is the cases when there is really nothing to do, when the difference between the price announced for payment by the State Fund Agriculture and the market price at the time when I have decided to make a delivery of such a fruit or vegetable, is much higher. With fruits and vegetables, it is very difficult to get into a given size. The price comes second. The quality is in first place, the calibration, because we are also talking about weights. Nature produces the vegetables, and we can only sort and deliver them, in accordance with the requirements of the Ordinance of the Agriculture State Fund. In the previous two groups, your colleagues presented the winter months as the most difficult for delivery, because there is a lack of variety of fruits and the prices are different from the announced ones.

M: A question to all: in the previous two groups, your colleagues presented the winter months as the most difficult for delivery, because there is a lack of variety of fruits and the prices are different from the announced ones. How do you manage in winter months to meet the criteria for 4 different fruits? Do you manage to achieve this required diversity?

R: I do not think the problem is the lack of fruits. Rather, in combination with the requirements for a certain percentage of Bulgarian supplies and diversity, this gives us limitations. In order to comply, we are forced to....Excuse me for a moment!

M: No problem! Other opinions while we are waiting?

R: In this case, there are no problems with these 4 types of fruits during the winter months, because there is an abundance of citrus fruits, there are pears, there are also apples. Variety can always be achieved during the winter months. The problem comes when the supply of products from a Bulgarian manufacturer is increased to 75% and this rule for 4 types is maintained, this impossibility to implement the Ordinance will appear there. Under the current Ordinance, there is no problem to observe this diversity. Rather, towards the end of the program, there may be some difficulty in fulfilling the variety, because the prices are already up and things become quite more difficult. I, personally, have not had any problems in the winter. You supply oranges, you supply tangerines, you have Bulgarian apples, you have pears, and here you have 4 fruits. I do not have problems.

R: I am sorry, but I had to join a conversation. I wanted to say that the amendments to the Ordinance are about to be adopted. I hope that this meeting and the results of the meetings you hold will be taken into account when drafting the final version of the Ordinance, but as it is currently planned, with 35 Bulgarian supplies and preserving the diversity of 4 species, we all will be on the verge of fulfilling the requirements. As far as I am aware, in the last 2 years there have been quite a few sanctioned suppliers for not fulfilling these requirements. Now we are raising



the criteria and the penalties will be on a much larger number of suppliers. I believe that adopting a variety of 3 types will enable us to deliver more Bulgarian products in the winter months as well. Perhaps, the colleagues from the previous meetings had in mind the months after January. By the end of the year, we usually manage to deliver a lot of Bulgarian products, combined with citrus fruits. The problems are from January onwards.

R: I absolutely agree. The colleague very correctly said that by January, all other Bulgarian fruits that can be delivered are finished. In the previous years, there was not even a Bulgarian greenhouse cucumber, so I absolutely agree that if the variety is reduced to 3 fruits, it will be more possible to meet this requirement of 35% Bulgarian fruit and vegetable supply. Purely mathematically, it is not normal to increase some requirements and not to decrease others. Otherwise, there will be really a big problem and many of the colleagues will be on the verge of implementation and will be threatened with sanctions, since they will not be able to fulfill the requirement of the Ordinance.

M: Thank you! How would you rate the reimbursement process? In your opinion, does the chosen approach guarantee the efficient supply of products or not?

R: One of the things I want to say about reimbursement is about the so-called “ten-day periods”.

M: What is a “ten-day period”?

R: A “ten-day period” is that they discovered some irregularity. Like the bank seal is not that visible, for example. What to do? Well, it is not visible. People stamp, we give the statement and everything is OK.

What State Fund Agriculture sometimes does, sometimes does not, but my request is that they send it to us by e-mail. Every time we fill out the payment applications, we also write down the e-mail address. They have our e-mails, they have our phones and they can send them to us there so that we can react in time. When they send them by Bulgarian posts, they do not always find us and we receive the note, and this slows things down. The better option is by email so you can see it right away and return what you need the same day. That way things will go faster. They should use those services that are available a little more.

That is my suggestion. I do not know if there is a representative of the State Fund Agriculture here?

M: No, there is not.

R: I do not know what to say, but I hope something will happen. The colleague’s proposal for 3 types of fruits is something that would be good to accept, so that we can fulfill the condition for 35 deliveries of Bulgarian fruits. The children will eat a lot of apples, I can tell, but we are an apple producer and we will be happy. We are just not happy about the price at which we buy the organic apple, because it turns out expensive. But the children are waiting for them. Everyone got used to these programs, got used to the delivery, they include them in their menus.

The bad thing is that many kindergartens at the territory of Varna gave up on these programs, because it is not allowed to give the fruits to the children to take them home. Some do it, contrary to the Ordinance, because they are fed several times in the kindergarten and this is a little too much. After all, how much a 5-year-old can eat?!



M: The reason they gave up on these programs is because the children bring the food home?

R: No, that they cannot take it home, they have to eat it there.

M: I have heard that this is a practice in schools.

R: Not everywhere. When the assistant teacher says she does not want to bother giving these things away, everything ends. The program gives a choice to participate or not, and they use that thing. Why do they have to deal with additional things for which they do not receive funds?! After all, they are not the authority that distributes these funds. They are not like, for example, school snacks, where schools distribute the funds and things are different there. They participate obligatorily there, but here – not! They just do not want to deal with extra work since the assistant teachers refuse.

M: It is a pity that we do not have a representative of the kindergartens at the moment, but I heard that there is a kitchen there and the assistant teachers in question can cook the food that remains. While in school, the food remains and so they distribute them to the students.

R: They cannot cook it. They have no right. If they put it in something to cook it, they have to return the funds. The Ordinance does not allow. They just have to give these fruits, yellow cheeses, cheeses, etc. to the children to take them home when they go home. My grandchildren bring them home, for example, but it all depends on the principals. One of my suggestions is kindergarten principals to be required to participate in these programs. Schools refuse under the pretext that the school gets dirty.

M: We have a school representative. How do you deal with the fruits and vegetables that remain?

R: We do not have fruits and vegetables, as well as milk left, because we give them out, along with this snack that the gentleman mentioned. They are given to the children and they decide whether they will eat them during the day or take them home. This is mandatory – these snacks are distributed in the morning during the first break. After that, the child decides for himself what to do. We are on a full-day form of education and the children decide for themselves whether to eat it in the morning, in the afternoon or take it home. Either way, they are theirs.

R: We do not talk about whether the kids want them or not. We talk about that your colleagues say: “We do not want to get our school dirty!” There are many children who make ...

M: With tomatoes, for example.

R: Let’s not talk about tomatoes, because we have all been in brigades and know what happens. I am talking about the milk that they often spill.

R: That’s right! This happens often but the cleaning ladies clean.

R: Yes, but the cleaning ladies are objecting and the principal is confused and stops the deliveries because there is no one to clean the school. It turns out that the big problem with schools refusing to participate in the programs is the boycott of cleaning ladies who do not want to clean.

R: After all, this is their job.

R: This is a matter of management by the principal.



R: This is true, but I do not think it is a problem to give up.

R: I am telling you, this is the reason why many large schools drop out. One of the largest schools in Varna refused exactly because of this. They have about 900 children. The cleaning ladies boycotted because the school was getting dirty and that was the reason. The principal said he had the right to give up and he did. There's no avoiding the "cleaning lady" factor.

M: The rest of you, have you heard of such cases? I am curious if this is the case in other places as well.

R: I am telling you how it is in Varna. The main reason is there, as well as the fact that the Ordinance does not allow the child to take it home.

M: I do not think anyone observes that, but...

R: This is the other reason. There are some principals who are more principled and they say: "According to the Ordinance, we are not allowed to give it to him/her to take it home."

M: Yes.

R: This is, unfortunately, the situation. We convince them and they give it to the children. In the first shift they eat what they eat, then there is a second shift and those who stay all day. They give them one, two, three, only to give them to the children. The thing is, that this is food. In these years, when everything is going up, it is a sin not to use this food, given that it was paid for by Bulgaria with contributions to the EU.

M: Half is financed by the EU and the other half by the state budget.

R: Even so! Part of the food is paid for and it is a sin to refuse this food. If they allow them to give it for home, then it is not a problem. Not every family can buy fruits all the time and it will get worse this year as everything goes up. This is a proposal for the Ordinance – that they are allowed to give them to the children. It will be easier for you too. You will be able to support some of your children who are socially weak.

With the cleaning ladies the problem is big. The cleaning ladies are hindering this, but no principal wants to enter into a confrontation with the cleaning ladies.

M: Now it occurs to me to ask the representative of the school something. I heard from your colleagues yesterday that one of the conditions of the Ordinance is that the delivered products must be distributed on the same day or the next day at the latest, which is a problem for them. Do you have such problems?

R: We do not have that problem because we give them out every day when we have a delivery. After the first break, they are distributed to the children and they decide what to do with them. We only had a problem during the pandemic, when there were quarantined classes and then we collected them from several deliveries, and when the children returned, we gave them in bags. We have a refrigerator where we kept them. In any way the children are entitled to them. I think that every school makes a scheme of exactly how to distribute them and what exactly to do with those who cannot be distributed. We have had cases where there are fruits that spoil faster. Then we gave them to other children who are in school. There are ways, as long as there is a wish.



The only problem is with the apples piling up. Indeed, there is a moment when children say: “Oh! An apple again?!” Generally, they pile up in a bag in the room and the cleaning ladies throw them away when they rot. But such a problem that they do not want to clean... Yes, it gets dirty a lot with the milk, but they just clean more often. I do not think that it is such a problem that schools refuse the program.

M: Okay. Let’s go back to the reimbursement of eligible expenses. The other suppliers, how do you evaluate this process?

R: I agree that with the developing technologies, it is good to use e-mails to send the requests for additional information or the so-called “ten-day periods”. I have received such. Mrs. Shushkova sent me emails, called me, and I worked very quickly when I had such a case. It is true that with Bulgarian Posts, things do not always happen on time and this slows down the whole refunding process. It would be good to be able to contact each other through emails or phone calls, which is what this lady was doing.

The colleague raised the issue about the fruits being given to the children to take them home. I had a case even before the pandemic, in which BFSA came to make an inspection on a complaint that the pear was rotten. In the autumn period, when the child kept it in the bag and threw the bag around, it softened. After the inspection, it was found that the quality of the fruit is normal, but when it is distributed and not consumed on the spot immediately, we enter in a case in which all suppliers can be inspected pointlessly.

Apart from that, I am also “for” the children to eat and have variety, but there is no way we can handle it if there are 35 deliveries or 70% of the deliveries are Bulgarian fruit.

M: I see. The rest of you, do you have a different opinion on the reimbursement process?

R: Nothing else I could say. During the past school year, the State Fund Agriculture was able to start processing our payment requests much faster than in previous years, because a fairly large percentage of suppliers had received the requested amounts for the first requests from September, October and November by the end of the calendar year, which had not happened before. As the months went by, however, they went back to the old practice, within the maximum allowable period of 3 months for reviewing the requests, to receive these letters to correct errors or inaccuracies, on the last day of the expiring three-month period, which really creates a lot of tension with suppliers, and to ensure working capital. This is not a small period in which we wait for refunding. With processing times, refunding takes usually up to the fourth month, and for some colleagues even longer. If there is a way for this processing, whether through some electronic system that will be easier for everyone, or otherwise, to shorten this period, it would be helpful.

M: Okay. Does the product distribution model affect delivery costs? Yesterday a colleague of yours shared that he delivers to smaller settlements and has to deliver to 500 children and for him there are higher fuel costs as he has to pass through several settlements, while his colleagues in Sofia deliver to 500 children within two schools in one neighborhood, for example. This is just one example of how the distribution model affects costs. Do you have any similar examples?



R: I do not think this can be distinguished. We are one of the providers that have quite a large number of educational establishments, but most of them have a very small number of children in the target group and the sites require costs indeed, but I do not think that this can be compared. Colleagues from big cities, who serve larger sites, have other costs that are incomparable to ours. I do not think that deliveries in Sofia or Varna are cheaper than ours.

R: We deliver not only in Varna, but we work on the territory of Varna and Dobrich. The expenses for those who are out of town are really pretty big, because the number of children in one educational establishment is small – between 10 and 50, but you have to go anyway. One van leaves with 500-600 pieces and travels 250-300 km. There the costs are radically different. It is not like in the city. In the city it is one thing, and outside the city it is completely different, but we cannot deprive the children who are in the smaller settlements. It would be good if there is some kind of regulation or something that would allow us to feed them.

M: Okay. My next question is to everyone. Do you think that the schemes contribute to increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products among children or not?

R: As I said earlier, my grandchildren learned to eat fruits. The children learned what a fruit is and how to eat it. For me, this program is a very good thing. I have said this more than once to everyone who have asked me questions. This is a good thing that should continue. If possible, it should be mandatory. I welcome the program regardless of all the negative aspects we are taking. We put a large refrigerator in each educational institution, where they can store them. Once again I say that the program is good. It should continue for the next programming period, but let it be mandatory. It is not good one child in one school to say: “I received a banana today” and the other not to get anything. Why? Because the “cleaning lady” factor refuses to clean and the principal refuses to participate!

M: Okay. The rest, what do you think?

R: It is a fact that most children have learned to eat fruits, but there are also such who are not used to it at home and their parents have not been able to make them eat it. They continue like this in school, but the program is really good. It is good for children to eat more fruits and vegetables, as well as milk and dairy products.

M: What could be done to further increase the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products among children within the schemes?

R: To be honest, when they have greater choice, when they have a variety of fruits and vegetables, then they really eat more of them. I told you that at some point they get tired of this apple. There should be variety and they consume more. Apparently, the program restricts providers.

M: Other opinions? What else can be done to increase consumption and awareness?

R: I think that the program is successful how it is. Indeed, the consumption of milk products, fruits and vegetables is increasing among children. Increasing the target group that the products reach would be helpful so that even more children can benefit from it. I believe that children in the age group after 4th grade and in the nursery groups should also be encouraged to consume these products. We often have a problem in kindergartens where there are nursery groups.



Imagine how out of 50 children, 40 today consume fruit and milk, and the rest, just because they do not meet the legislative requirements, do not receive them. It is the same in primary schools where children up to grade 8 could also benefit from these products and this would be useful for the purposes of the program.

M: Yes. That was my next question: do you think the target groups of the scheme are appropriate and children at what age do you think should be covered by the school schemes?

R: For us, according to my observations, from 1st to 4th grade is fine. Older students are already going for other foods, as much as we do not want them to. As much as we strive for healthy eating, the fact is that older students will throw them away, I guess.

M: What is the reason for this? Unbuilt habits from the start or what?

R: I would not say unbuilt habits. I have three boys. One is 7th grade and I can see it. His habits were different, but they change. The food he eats when he goes out with other children is already completely different and not what we want. I see what the kids at school eat during the long break. It is not a sandwich your mom made at home, which for sure will be healthier than a bag of chips.

M: Yes.

R: Very few children continue to eat healthily.

M: Who continue after being part of the scheme, or generally few?

R: Generally. According to my observations, it is so.

M: And do you have any observations over the children who were part of the scheme but are no longer in that group?

R: Yes, I have. Our school is elementary and generally I have observations over all the students.

M: What is it?

R: Their habits are changing. As much as you want to teach them eat healthily, by watching each other, by not being that controlled on what they eat, habits change.

M: In your opinion, does the scheme contribute to reducing overweight and obesity in children?

R: I cannot say this. It is individual for each child. Whether it is from the fruits or something else, there is obesity. For some, no matter how much they eat, they still do not get fat. I have a personal example at home and that is why I can say. I guess it helps to eat a piece of fruit instead of a snack of dough. It is better, but most children, unfortunately, do not think so.

M: Are there any products, part of the Ordinance, that you would replace, from the point of view of an educator and from the point of view of a provider? Are there any that you would replace or add to the Ordinance?

R: I have already said that variety is better than repeating the same product, but with the parameters they have been given, suppliers simply have no choice.

M: Okay. Suppliers, would you like to add a product? One of the previous groups offered blackberries, raspberries and blueberries. Can you think of a product that could be added?



R: I can only add that as the list is prepared, I do not think it allows for the supply of different fruits, vegetables and dairy products than those included, having in mind also the health requirements for the products, their content and that they should be entirely conforming to BDS standard, which is normal, considering the recipient of these products. It would be absurd to include raspberries and blackberries in the lists, because in practice this will lead to great losses. Not possible! I do not know where this suggestion comes from.

M: From a colleague of yours from the Northwest region.

R: It is good the included products to be conforming to reality and not just filling the list. And if they are included, to create conditions and prices that really allow their real delivery.

M: Yes. Raspberries and blackberries spoil much easier and I can imagine how the children will play with them and...

R: There is certainly no child who does not like raspberries, strawberries or any of these fruits, but it is not possible in our conditions to store them and give them to the children in a suitable form.

M: Yes, I see.

We have said many things so far. If you can think of something, like a recommendation, that was not mentioned during the conversation, now is the time to bring it up as we are wrapping up the conversation?

R: With the risk of sounding trite, I have already given my suggestion about using email addresses and phone numbers for notification letters.

The second thing is, the target group is quite normal. The child, if you do not teach him from kindergarten, you will never teach him again. The program is very good. The target group – also. Prices must be adjusted. The fruits they gave us, as a list, are OK and actually doable. We took out the grapefruit, we took out the kiwi, because that is really hard to consume in the educational establishments.

I say again, my wish, as well as that of my colleagues, is to make the participation of these groups in this program mandatory and to avoid the “cleaning lady” factor. This is the problem. In Varna, according to my observations, about 30% of children in the city do not participate.

M: Thank you! The rest, do you want to add anything for conclusion?

R: The only thing is that the list of the Ordinance includes the only dairy products that can be supplied to the children of the target group. All other dairy products that are by-products and have dyes cannot be provided, so with regard to the dairy products, this is optimal.

Regarding fruits and vegetables, I agree with my colleague that raspberry, blackberry, strawberry will be difficult. Most likely, the colleague is a producer of such fruits and therefore he offered them.

Anyway, thank you for inviting me. Hopefully there will be subsequent results from this conversation. Thank you!



M: I hope too. Thank you! If there is nothing else to add, I want to thank you for participating. You made your point quite well. I also hope, as an external evaluator, that they will pay attention to it. This is from me.

R: We have not discussed one topic that is by no means unimportant, namely the increase in organic supplies, at least in the form in which they are included in the draft amendment of the Ordinance. The increase in organic supplies is almost doubled. I believe that this is impossible at this stage. It is good any changes that are planned to be made smoothly, for example: the requirement for Bulgarian supplies not to jump by 10, but to be only 30, so that we can all adapt; bio deliveries, if they were 4-6 until now, should become at least 6, and with the changes planned now, they are 10. I do not know how the budget will cope with such a large expenditure. Let the colleagues express their opinion on this matter, but this is a rather serious problem that we will face this school year.

One more thing! We are already in a period of waiting for acts of approval and it seems extremely wrong to me that the rules under which we will work would be changed in the course, provided that each supplier has made their own judgment as to whether and where to participate in this program. It is good these changes to come into force not for the upcoming academic year, but from the next one.

M: Could you explain to me why such an increase in organic products would be a supply problem?

R: Because I do not think that the Bulgarian organic producers are sufficiently well prepared with quantity and quality to meet the requirements of the program. We faced this and already in January and February there were no more quality organic apples to deliver to educational establishments. Production is insufficient in quantity and quality.

M: Okay. Other opinions regarding organic products?

R: I completely agree with my colleague. This sharp increase in the number of deliveries of organic products will make it difficult for us, as suppliers, for the same reasons. If there is quantity, there is no quality of organic products. On the other hand, the budget of the State Fund Agriculture will be burdened, whereas the prices of organic products are always much higher.

Last but not least, it is really good when we apply, it is really good to know what Ordinance we are working under and not to make wholesale changes after a while. As they have assigned you to make this survey, to correspond with us in the same way to get feedback on how things are going so that we can partner better and better.

M: Regarding the communication between you and the State Fund Agriculture, how is it performed? I understood that were meetings that have been suspended, but are you getting the information you need via email and phone?

R: I told you that I was in very good communication with that woman Shushkova regarding what should happen with these "ten-day periods". Otherwise, requests are submitted to the regional directorates of the State Fund Agriculture. I have not encountered any difficulties there. The only thing I would say is that receiving at the end of the period when we should have been



reimbursed, a request for additional information delays the payment. After all, we must have a financial resource to be able to operate adequately.

M: Okay. The rest, how would you rate the communication with the State Fund Agriculture? What needs to be improved?

I guess we have covered everything we need. Have a nice day and thank you again for participating! Thank you and have a nice day!

R: Thank you! Have a nice day!

R: Thank you all!

7.3.4 South Central Region, 13.07.2022

M: Hello to everyone!

R: Hello! I am B. B. from a primary school in the village of Benkovski, Maritsa Municipality. I am a new principal and this is my third year of working on the school schemes. Students are happy, parents are happy, deliveries are on time. I have no significant comments. The products are in good appearance – packed, cleaned and washed. I have no specific remarks.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! I am L. B. and I am principal of primary school. I have been a principal since 2018 and the school was participating in these schemes from before that.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! I am M. P. from a kindergarten in the town of Kardjali. We opened in 2019 and have been working on the schemes since then. We are very satisfied. Children are happy to eat the BDS products. Everything is going as planned. The suppliers perform everything following the schedule. Documents are prepared every month. We have no remarks.

M: Thank you!

R: Hello! I am S. Ch. and I am a provider under both schemes. We have been a supplier since the beginning – almost 10 years now.

M: You?

R: Hello! I am a manager of a company that is a supplier under the schemes. I have been working on the School Fruit and School Milk schemes since the beginning.

M: Thank you! Only D. P. remains

R: Hello! I have been working on the programs since 2015. I am from Velingrad.

M: We can now proceed to the essential part, as I expect 2-3 more people to join.

I would like to start with a question for the suppliers. Can you tell me if the documentation you have for the application itself is clear enough? How would you rate the application in terms of the documentation?



R: Regarding the application documentation, my only remark is that due to the frequent changes in the regulations, the application form that the principals of educational establishments sign, also changes. The new form is literally submitted at the last moment by the State Fund Agriculture. We have the practice of signing as early as March-April. The principals force us to sign the new declarations for the next school year. It happens that after the State Fund Agriculture provides us the new form, it has to be signed again by the principal of the educational institution, which is not a problem, but is double work.

Everything else is by regulation. It is easy. The only condition is that the principal confirms with a stamp and signature that he wants a certain company to be the supplier under a certain scheme. In my opinion, this is the best way to apply. The principal is responsible for these children and only he can decide with which company to work. If one year he is not satisfied with this company, he has the opportunity to replace it for the next year, not like it was 3 years ago when they introduced an opportunity to prioritize one over the other. This is not correct because it takes away the principal's right to choose his supplier.

M: You mean that currently the principals choose with which supplier to work?

R: The principals here can confirm that it is right that they should be able to choose with who they will work, because they bear the moral and material responsibility for the children and for everything that happens in the schools and in the kindergartens. If the principal is not satisfied with the supplier company, he/she can easily replace it next year, as it is now. This, in my opinion, is the most correct way to apply.

R: I just want to add that it is not necessary to sign multiple schedules as it is now. When submitting the documents, we are obliged to make schedules, which are not based on anything, because the dates of vacations and days off are not announced. In reality, we are doing exercises that are unnecessary. We make schedules several times a year, and the most important and up-to-date ones are from September. It is not necessary to submit schedules during the application itself, which are not valid anyway.

M: Are they not indicative or should they necessarily...

R: They must be in accordance with the vacations announced by the Ministry of Education and Science. When applying for the program by May 31st, we submit these schedules without the MES announced the vacations. We write them at prima vista and correct them in September, when the act is issued. We have ten days then. In fact, we make schedules multiple times, which is pointless. The schedule should be submitted solely and only when the act of approval has passed, and we do it several times – during the application, when the act is issued, and in cases of force majeure. We may have to change the schedule 5 times a year.

M: Thank you! Does anyone else want to add anything regarding all the documentation during application?

How would you rate the process of approving the applications by the State Fund Agriculture – fast, with clear feedback, or things happen slowly and unclearly?

R: The application procedure itself follows the established order and there is nothing concerning. It takes time to process the documents. If there are principals who have signed with several



companies, then there is difficulty of having to give the final choice of an applicant. There is nothing slow, cumbersome or embarrassing.

M: Thank you!

R: There is really nothing to worry about. Everything is fine with the way of application and with the speed with which the documents are processed.

M: Okay.

R: I want to ask something. I do not know if it is allowed for another age group to be included for the next school year. 120 students study in our school, and the students from 1st to 4th grade now will be 69. At the place where they receive the fruit and milk under this scheme, it happens that the older students pass by and see them. I would like to suggest, if possible, that students from 5th to 7th grade also join from the next school year. We are a primary school and it would be a pleasure for us to have all the students included because times are difficult and in addition, we have students of Roma origin and we have families whose two young children are students from 1st to 4th grade, and the other two are from 5th to 7th grade. Two of them get a banana for breakfast and the other two do not. This is my proposal – from the next school year, if there are finances, students from 5th to 7th grade to be included in these school schemes.

M: We will talk a little later about the target group, but I would like to go through all the questions consistently. I just want to say that we are not representatives of the State Fund Agriculture. I am part of a team that is an external evaluator and your suggestions will be presented, but nothing depends on me.

Now I want to turn to the suppliers again. Could you tell me what is the mechanism for choosing the products you distribute in educational establishments and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: First, we are guided by the children's wishes. The most preferred fruits are banana, orange, pear, apple. We then comply with the Ordinance in order to achieve that diversity that is set out there. Another factor is the season. Things are seasonal and at first we concentrate on ones, then on others and so on, depending on what is available in the market.

M: Does the price influence the product selection?

R: Yes, but to a minimum. It is not the price that matters, at least for me.

M: Okay. S., for you, what is the mechanism for choosing products that you distribute and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: The most important thing is really what is preferred by the children. I am a member of an association with 80 supplier companies. We made a survey in about 1000 educational establishments, which showed that the banana is preferred in the first place. 674 principals said banana is most preferred. Apple is in second place – 248 schools and kindergartens. Orange is in third place with 159 educational establishments. Tangerine is in fourth place. The pear goes to fifth. It is important what the children like, but we must also comply with the Ordinance and the four different fruits. The other requirement so far was that 50% of the supplies have to be Bulgarian agricultural products. About this, perhaps, we will talk further in the conversation.



M: Yes. We, in parallel with these discussions, are also conducting quantitative studies among children and parents, and they have showed similar results. I have heard from previous group discussions that there is strong concern from suppliers regarding this change to 70% obligation to use Bulgarian production, which is currently under public discussion. Does this concern you?

R: It concerns me personally because it is too much. There is almost no mass Bulgarian production, except for apples. We do not have much choice, especially in the months of January and February when achieving these agricultural supplies is very difficult. From December to February, there are more bananas, oranges and tangerines, and we have to reach a high percentage of agricultural supply and it becomes very difficult. There is no way we can provide the children with a tomato in a school, because you understand what happens in the children's bags. No child can be made eat that fruit or vegetable right now. In most cases, it happens that the children throw it in the bag, and when it is a tomato, you can imagine what happens. Then there are remarks to the supplier as to why this is supplied, and we have to fulfill conditions, in fact, which at some point become unfeasible when there is no production.

Another problem is that Bulgarian production cannot always be found with sufficiently good quality. Some problems arise, and they are always on the account of the supplier, because everyone strives to give the best and the highest quality goods that is possible to be found on the market. When there are such problems, the supplier becomes the bad guy. I do not think it is good for schools to deliver a tomato, a cucumber. It is preferable to be a fruit. For kindergartens, it is possible to include a vegetable. It is not such a big problem there, but it is for the school.

M: As far as I know, you can choose what to supply to the schools, right?

R: Yes, we can choose and change, but when we have to make 75 deliveries of Bulgarian agricultural produce in the periods from October to May, we do not have a very wide variety of Bulgarian products. Apples are the main thing available. The pear is much less. September-October we start with grapes, because there are some, but then there are no more. We are very limited in type diversity. If the new changes are approved, we will be entitled to 15 deliveries of citrus, which makes 3 deliveries per month and it happens so that we have to meet the condition for 4 different types, but we do not have much choice what to supply with these restrictions. If we have average 10 deliveries a month, 6 deliveries must be apples, which at some point becomes too much and the kids get tired of it. We do not have type diversity because of this high rate of agricultural supply. This is my opinion. The better option was at 50%. This is also new for us and I do not know how we will manage this year with this 70% agricultural supply if it is accepted.

M: Do the other suppliers share these concerns?

R: Yes. The so drafted ordinance with these percentages will make it very difficult to implement the program itself. I think the effect will be bad, both for us and for the educational establishments and for the children. This variety that we currently offer, we will no longer be able to perform. This will also shift the focus. We will not be able to give the most preferred products to the children. This percentage is very high and we will work very difficult if they accept it. There will be dissatisfaction by the principals, teachers and children.



R: On the part of the parents there will also be dissatisfaction because it is not normal if we have a maximum of 10 deliveries per month, under these conditions, we will not be able to deliver more than 3 times citrus, which means that there will be weeks in which both deliveries will be apples. We will comply with the condition of 4 different fruits because it is stipulated by Ordinance and we have no choice not to comply with it, but the percentage of agricultural supply is too high. There are months of the year when there is no type diversity. I will say again that we have grapes only at the beginning of the school year and then they disappear as a type of product with which we can diversify. 35 deliveries to be only agricultural, it is already very difficult for us in terms of type diversity, so that the children are satisfied. The parents' board also monitors things and there should be variety. We cannot supply only apples.

R: If the increase in the number of deliveries is accepted, the variety requirement should be also changed to 3 instead of 4 products per month. It will be very difficult for us to achieve this diversity.

M: Yes. This was also shared by other colleagues of yours. Also, they shared another concern regarding the change in the condition of delivery of organic products. They said that there is not much choice from manufacturers of similar products and very often the manufacturers themselves set prices that are impossible for the suppliers. Do you have such a problem?

R: Yes. We come to apples again. The main organic fruits are again apples. Yes, there is a monopoly. There are not many organic apple producers. The prices are agreed between them and a generalized final price is presented, which is also in line with the Fund's price. If this organic apple costs BGN 1.50 on average, it is sold to us for BGN 3. About this, I am of the opinion that there really is some kind of monopoly and they decide their prices, compared to the prices announced by the Fund. They estimate how much is enough to leave us as profit, not taking into account the fact that we go around every single village, no matter how far it is from the warehouse and how many children there are. I have villages 50-60 km away from the warehouse, in which there are 5 children who fall into the target group. It is clear to everyone that I deliver there only because of the ethical principle of the program, that every child should receive this product, no matter how far away they are from us. There can be no question of profit.

M: Other opinions?

R: My opinion is similar to that of my colleagues, with slight clarifications. We know best the nature of the work, and we know the consequences of such an increase. I am also very much for Bulgarian production, organic production. The problem is that the program is from September to May, during which time there are only apples, pears and grapes. In September we catch some prunes and nectarines here and there, but I cannot even mention them because they are already finished. I.e., only grapes, pears and apples remain. Pears and grapes are over in October and November. I say it directly and boldly. There are only apples left. Not all producers can store the apples from January to March, which means that there remain a few large producers who have opportunities and have invested to be able to provide us with agricultural Bulgarian apples. It happens that from January to May, when we allocated our deliveries evenly throughout the school year, every second delivery, not to mention a larger number, is of apples. Here, the most deprived by a possible amendment of the Ordinance are the children. In my opinion, we should be guided mostly by them. If we bring them an apple every time, they will refuse. We all have



children and we know that when something is unvaried, you get used to it. The emphasis of the program itself, in its European form, is learning the children to the habit of consuming fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products.

As a summary, I can say that with the good idea to increase the supply of Bulgarian agricultural products, there will be refusal by children to consume the fruits and refusal of educational establishments principals, who have already started with some remarks since last school year of the type: "You cannot give an apple every time! Cannot you have a banana more often?". We enter explanatory mode that we do everything according to the Ordinance. So far we have done more or less well, but now that they want to raise that limit, we will cross that limit of tolerance on the part of the principals, of the children and it will be to the detriment of the scheme itself.

M: Okay. And how would you rate the process of reimbursement of eligible costs? Is the system successful, does it work for you? As far as I know, once they accept all your documentation, they reimburse you after a certain period of time.

R: This year, the State Fund Agriculture is working better and better in this direction. We want a week after we submit the request to be paid because we have already incurred the cost of purchasing the goods, paid the employees, paid the rent, electricity and everything else. Years ago there was a delay of 2-4 months. Production that we delivered in September was paid to us in January. Things are much better now. For me, on this point, everything is fine.

R: I second that opinion that this school year the payout is significantly better. We are not waiting for payment for 4-5 months.

M: Okay. Can you think of any other feature within deliveries that you would like to share?

Now I have a question for the representatives of educational establishments. Could you tell me if parents are aware of the schemes? How does the information about their application reach them?

R: Parents get acquainted at our parents' meetings. In addition, we have special stickers as well as large information boards, so parents are very happy. The feedback from them is very good. What parent would not want their child to consume fruits, vegetables and dairy products every day?

M: Do you think there is anything that could be improved or changed in terms of this relationship between parents and schemes?

R: No. What does it mean to improve?

M: To include, let's say, some additional activity, which will give information to parents in more detail or will provide more clarity about the products?

R: After all, we work for the children. If they provide us with any promotional materials, we would distribute them. After all, we work for the children.

R: In our institution also parents get acquainted yet at the beginning of the school year at a parents' meeting, which takes place before September 15th. In addition, we are obliged to post informational materials on all projects.



My suggestion for promoting these schemes is: The Ministry of Education and Science created a Viber channel on which they publish any information of any nature. It would be good, at the beginning of the school year, when starting these activities, to make such informational announcements so that parents are aware. Everyone is now using Viber etc. You see, in the field of education, bad news spreads very quickly, and good news is not advertised. My suggestion is that through the MES channels which they use to promote all kinds of projects, they should do the same for these schemes.

Especially for Smilyan, things are going very well. Even in 2020, when we were all online, the State Fund Agriculture provided the products that we delivered to the homes of those who could not come to school. The rest of the children were given the products in the school's canteen according to schedule.

M: The rest of you, do you get any feedback from parents and what is it?

And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and dairy products organized in schools ?

R: We have a medical person who, according to a schedule drawn up according to Ordinance 13, in the form tutor's class presents exactly such topics about a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating. In addition, our students are on a full-day form of education and in the activities by interest they make various stickers and posters. Basically, from the survey you conducted among all of us, we talked to the parents, most of the children eat the fruit here because at home, the kids like French fries and all kinds of junk. This provision of fruits, vegetables and dairy products under these schemes is beneficial for a good nutrition culture and for supporting the budgets – of schools and families. Especially during the winter period when fruits are expensive. Feedback from parents is very good here. We have teachers and parents who have the task to promote the subject of this project and to talk about this healthy eating at the parents' meetings, which is a commitment of every parent, in fact.

R: I support my colleague. Our school is a rural school that has a tradition of eating fruits and vegetables. However, things are well received in terms of product variety. I have no remarks from the parents. The only thing I have set as a condition for myself is to clarify with the company that provides my catering meals. It happened sometimes that the dessert and the fruit are the same, but these things are a moment of further clarification.

Regarding the information campaign, we inform them within the form tutor's class. Visual information is through posters and stickers. In general, things are like this. I have no complaints and the parents are happy.

M: Thank you!

R: We have set topics that are followed during the educational activity. In the additional activities, we include many different ones, such as small bites that we make from fruits in the form of skewers, to introduce children to healthy eating. We present this to the parents in the groups, so that the parents are also participants and see how we engage their children. We are talking about the additional activities. Besides that, we have in the main classes, mandatory topics that cover healthy eating.



M: And do you get any feedback from them regarding the scheme?

R: In the groups we have made ourselves. Yes, we have feedback of course. They know this is happening because of the program itself.

M: How would you accept if the so-called “accompanying measures” that are described in the Ordinance, such as visiting farms, organizing games, competitions and others, are organized? Is this possible to happen?

R: For us, whatever activities are organized are pleasant for the children. As a hindrance, I can point out that the Student Travel Ordinance requires a huge amount of work in collecting declarations, notification letters, etc. Visits to farms in the settlement will be well accepted, but outside the settlement will take a lot of time, purely organizationally. You should have in mind that we do not have farms in Smilyan, I would rather not deal with that, precisely because of that time-consuming organizational part.

M: Okay. Other opinions?

R: I support what the colleague said. On some other occasion, if some farm is visited... I do not know if it is possible to combine things. Let's say if we take a field trip at the end of the year and visit some landmark, like the Rose Valley, an ostrich farm, or something else that will be of interest to the students, will it count as an activity under the Ordinance. This is not clear to me and we can put it as a question.

M: As far as I know, the State Fund Agriculture should allocate such funds, but purely administratively, I do not know how this happens.

R: We have very young children and it is very difficult organizationally and documentarily.

R: The State Fund Agriculture could do it as some project activity, as the Ministry of Education and Science does for visiting cultural institutions. Within a budget of BGN 3,000, each school has the opportunity to apply, depending on where the settlement is and whether there are such sites. If there are such farms in Stara Zagora, colleagues from the schools could get involved in such project activities, if some funding is foreseen, of course. There are only few schools that could allocate funds to organize such a trip. As a project activity, they could join, especially if there are such sites in the settlement.

M: If it is part of a project activity, does that mean you will again have piles of paperwork to prepare?

R: When it is a project activity, the documentation is less.

M: I see. Thank you for the recommendation!

In your opinion, do school schemes contribute to increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products among children or not?

R: Consumption is definitely increasing, as well as the healthy lifestyle.

R: I can give feedback from a milk producer. The owner said: “Since you have been working with us on the school schemes, our sales in our town have gone up 3-4 times”. In-store sales, I mean.



M: Yes. In terms of the sustainability of the scheme, does it achieve sustainable eating habits in children over time or is it something temporary? In primary school, have you observed the eating habits of the children who were part of the program until 4th grade and then you still observe how they behave in this regard?

R: What we observe is that children love bananas the most and we take into account the children's wishes when we prepare the lunch menu because the parent needs to know that his child has eaten the cost of the coupon, he paid for 3 or 4 BGN. I cannot comment about other schools, but we have a closed cycle. The food complies with the School Meals Ordinance and I can say that the children eat what is provided to them as a lunch menu at school. Rather, the shopkeepers can tell what is going on, but in our institution, in the long break, we observe that the big students of grades 5-7 come back from the store with bananas or some kind of fruit rather than with pizza. There is certainly a sustainability and improvement in the eating habits of the students.

M: Great! What else can be done within the schemes, in your opinion, to build even more sustainable healthy eating habits among children?

R: I think that other types of products can be offered, as has been done in other European countries. We are talking about fruit juices, nuts, dried fruits – these are healthy products with which we will diversify supplies. It is good to offer it to the State Fund Agriculture. It is the time to congratulate the State Fund Agriculture, because Bulgaria is one of the leaders in terms of success of children in the age group. I think that about 98% of the children entitled to receive products under the schemes in Bulgaria receive them, thanks to the State Fund Agriculture and thanks to all farmers, dairy producers, suppliers and principals of educational establishments. It is good to say that, because thanks to all of us, the program is being implemented well. We hope that it will continue like this in the future.

In addition, I offer these different products so that things that have not been tried before can be tried. Like last year we started with the supply of honey, there are other products that will be interesting and preferred by the children. Maybe you should do a statistic again on what the children prefer.

R: May I ask why nursery groups children are not covered?

M: I cannot answer that question.

R: And will you ask it? You want feedback and I want to know why I have to separate since I have two nursery groups in my kindergarten. Why do I have to separate these 2 nursery groups from the kindergarten? Why do they not have right to it? Do not they need fruits, vegetables and dairy products? This is how we form eating habits from an early age.

M: The rest, do you think the selection of children's target groups is correct and does it need to be expanded?

R: I said from the beginning that it is good to cover the children from 1st to 7th grade. I support my colleague's opinion. In the kindergarten in Smilyan, in the same way, there is fruit and milk for one of the groups, but not for the other. Organizationally, it is difficult for cooks and



administrators, because they have to give one thing for one group, for the other – another. The work of the institutions that work on these schemes will be eased.

The other thing I want to suggest is to widen the scope. Children love fruit milks very much. If any company can undertake to make these fruit milks in compliance with the Ordinance, it will be good, because children eat milk with nuts, milk with fruits, etc. This would also ease delivery during the winter period. Suppliers can tell, actually.

M: Would that make it easier for you?

R: Definitely! If there is more type diversity, we will deliver it. We are limited by the Ordinance. We have certain products and we can deliver only them. Whatever is allowed, each supplier will take advantage and make the type diversity.

M: Yes. In a previous group discussion, one of the providers mentioned that there are kindergartens and schools that had quit the scheme because of the “cleaning lady factor”. According to him, the children made a lot of mess with the milk and fruits, and the school officials in question did not want to clean up, so the principals decided not to be part of the schemes. Have you heard of such cases?

R: No. This is the first time I hear it. How can an assistant educator, as we have in kindergartens, and they can have cleaning ladies... Who would not be happy to see a child sweetly eating yogurt, for example?! Here I want to support the idea of a fruit yogurt that would appeal to children. There is no such thing in our kindergarten, someone to give up such a healthy thing because of the cleaning up after the children.

M: I was puzzled as well, so I decided to check if other places were doing it this way.

R: What the colleague said is absolutely frivolous. Rather, it should be some kind of sign to him that the children’s hygiene habits are not good and they should focus their efforts on improving their hygiene habits rather than stopping something so beneficial. It is frivolous and you better not even mention it because they will laugh at you. This shows poor organization at school, not failure to clean.

M: This person was a supplier. He might be exaggerating a bit. I do not take his words at face value.

R: Do not take them at all. This is not serious!

M: Okay. In your opinion, to what extent do school schemes contribute to promoting the distribution of regional agricultural products? Do they manage to encourage local producers?

R: It is possible, where there are local farmers, we approach them first for produce. I think the scheme itself supports local markets. Most colleagues who work on the program buy from a dairy in their region. First we ask the local agricultural representatives for fruits and only after the quantities are over, we buy from other producers from other settlements.

M: Okay. In your opinion, does the implementation of the school schemes meet the needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of children?

R: Definitely yes. I have noticed that children from vulnerable groups really need this kind of support and eat all the food they are given in the morning or at lunch. It helps and is very useful.



We have few families in a bad financial situation, but for those who are, their children eat everything. In fact, colleagues have observed that when it is an apple or something harder, they put it in the bag and take it home. They are not children who throw away and do not appreciate what is provided to them.

M: Thank you! Does anyone want to add anything in this regard?

I suggest we move on to the last block of questions.

What are the most important factors for building eating habits in children? How are they represented in the objectives of school schemes?

R: At this very moment, there is no one who would not say that the most important factor in building eating habits is financial. We observe that students who have regularly attended kindergarten are taught to eat properly. It is very important to cover the children from the age of 3-4, because that is exactly what is done there – hygienic habits, culture of eating, etc. are built.

Certainly, the family factor also has an impact, but in large families very often the children do not manage to acquire the necessary percentage of food products for the respective age.

So, the family factor, the financial factor and mandatory kindergarten attendance because it is important for hygiene habits, eating habits and for increasing the educational level of students.

M: Does anyone want to add anything else?

With regard to the products, are there any of the current products that are not applicable in school or kindergarten? Are there any products that should be included and will keep the nutritional values that need to be given to children?

R: These products that are currently set are sufficient. If, let's say, milk with fruits is added to the program, every single supplier will provide it. Regarding the fruits, I do not see what else could be included. We work from September to May and there is no product that we will not deliver if available. Too many products are included but they are not available in the market at this exact time to deliver it.

M: In another discussion, a school principal shared that the weight of cheese and yellow cheese is so small that parents prefer not to give them to their children at all. They prefer milk. Do you have such observations?

R: I strongly disagree. The weight of yellow cheese and cheese is completely sufficient. I will go back to the subject of the cleaning lady who gets mad about getting dirty. It can be suggested to the State Fund Agriculture that the packaging should be bio-dissolvable or in some other form, because in this way we will also educate care for the environment.

M: Okay. If you want to add something like a recommendation?

R: I will join in with gratitude to the representative of the Sierra company - Ventsislav Sabev. He is working with many schools on this project. In Smilyan area, we are located at a very large distance from each other, and when I became principal, I contacted him with a request to be included, as a settlement in a more remote area, for which I thank him. I can share the opinion of the colleagues with whom I communicate in Smilyan District, that this is a project for which we thank Ventsi for assisting us and that we have the opportunity to be included, because it is very



easy to include a school with 600 children 300 of which will participate, but it is more difficult when the settlement is at a further distance. Mr. Sabev, thank you for working together and that the students from our school can benefit from these projects under the State Fund Agriculture!

R: I thank you too!

M: Okay. Any other opinions or final words before we wrap up?

R: I am glad that there is such an initiative from the State Fund Agriculture to find out from the people on whom the implementation of this program depends the most, which are the suppliers and the principals of the educational establishments, how the program is going and what are the things that are important. Thank you too for doing this research! In my opinion, the Ordinance in its current form is the most optimal for all these 10 years, because the application is easy, with a declaration that is easy to fill in. We said we have no complaints regarding the approval times. Optimal number of deliveries – 50 of agricultural producer, 50 – others. All this is very important to implement the program in this way.

In conclusion, I want to say to the decision makers: “Do not change something that works!”. If the delivery numbers increase, I am sure there will be an outflow or negative effect next year. If the program was from May to September, I would also agree to 100 Bulgarian agricultural products, but the program is from September to May and these 35 deliveries are too many and will cause a negative, not a positive, effect.

Thank you for everything!

M: And I thank you too! Does anyone else want to share something for finale?

Thank you so much for being thorough and helpful! I wish you all the best!

R: Thank you!

R: See you again!

R: Thank you!

7.3.5 Southeast Region, 14.07.2022

M: Hello!

R: My name is P. P. and I am from kindergarten.

M: How long have you been part of the school schemes?

R: Since 2019. For one year, we were supplied by another company that had won the contract, but then we returned to Daphne Group.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! I am from Burgas. Our company has been working with the State Fund Agriculture for 8 years. My personal experience is one year. I am responsible for accountability and I have 4 particular questions. Actually, not questions, but it is something that makes it difficult for us, because the past year was quite dynamic, if I can say so, because of the pandemic. Target number and rotation are the most essential things I would like to put as a case.



M: Okay. You will have this opportunity during the conversation. G. M. is next.

R: Hello! We also have been working on the program for 8 years and I have been following the whole program very strictly. We also have cases that we want to put. The lady before me mentioned the numbers. It often turns out that we are subsequently given numbers from the schools that do not match the number we have. We all know how we spent these two pandemic years – today they study, tomorrow they will not study... When you have to supply milk, you have a short term, a long term... but in the course of the discussion I will raise these questions.

M: Yes.

R: We also survived 2018 with the “great” advantages.

M: With what?

R: Advantages to producers. It is good to mention this issue because our company has already officially condemned two manufacturers. We have turned the economics upside down on how a manufacturer owes money to a merchant. This is surely a worldwide case. Fortunately for us, for 4 years now we have both New Project and BMK convicted at the last instance, so we can also mention these issues in the course of the discussion.

M: Yes, that would be interesting.

R: We work on the territory of Burgas and Stara Zagora Districts.

M: Okay, thank you! T. D., can you introduce yourself?

R: Hello to everyone! My name is T. D. and I represent Doychev MTV company. We have been working on the program for 12 years – from the very beginning in 2010. We have gone through absolutely all stages of problems, difficulties, but also successes. In general, we are quite familiar with things and with the problems. My colleague G. and I are members of an association that we have built. Its purpose is the building of eating habits in children, provision of pedagogical measures to children, which has been neglected in recent years. In general, we keep a pretty good level of work. A while ago Daphne Group was mentioned – they are also our member. All the things the colleagues have said so far, I also want to discuss. To tell you honestly, I am fascinated by your institution because you are the first to realize on whom things depend, who are the direct participants and who should give opinions on possible problems, and these are the educational establishments and the direct suppliers.

M: Just to say that I am not a representative of the State Fund Agriculture, but a representative of an external evaluation company, but the initiative to organize such meetings is theirs.

R: I know that you are from an external company. That’s exactly the problem: the state institution asks the producers to make changes to the Ordinance, given that they will not even fulfill the Ordinance’s requirements. It is like having a bystander tell you how to do your job.

M: Yes. Thank you! Mrs. A. K.? We cannot hear you. If you can check your microphone settings and then join us. In the meantime, we may continue with R. S.

R: Good day! I am a teacher in a unified school in the village of Tenevo, Tundzha Municipality.

M: Thank you!



We can now start with the real questions. Some of them are specifically for the suppliers, some are for the representatives of the educational establishments, but there are also some that are general. I would like to start with the suppliers.

Could you please tell me, is the whole application process with all the documentation required and have to be submitted convenient or not? Do you have any comments or specifics that you find convenient or applicable?

R: We do not encounter any difficulties with the declarations and other documents that need to be prepared. What we are doing, I think is enough. It is well formed and quick. No problems. Now, the questions I want to raise, maybe at a later stage...

M: Yes. If we start discussing your topic, you can say. At the end there will be a part where you can ask questions. This is a free discussion. The goal is, apart from the questions we have selected, to upgrade. We will not limit ourselves in any way.

R: Yes. Ask your questions and we will answer them. Then, whatever we have, we will raise it.

M: Exactly. The rest of you, do you have any different opinions regarding the application process?

R: Excuse me, do you hear me?

M: Yes, we can hear you now, A.!

R: Sorry for the inconvenience! I am a representative of a supplier company. We have been working on the schemes since their start – for 12 years. I personally have been engaged in this activity for 5 years.

In relation to the question you asked, it is not a difficult procedure, but for me it is unnecessary to burden the systems with documentation when nothing changes in the information we submit each subsequent year, i.e. my contract with milk suppliers, with the farmer, with the organic producer, is the same. Why do I have to attach absolutely all the documents that I have already sent once to the State Fund Agriculture when applying for the first time? This is superfluous work, in my opinion.

M: Okay, thank you! The rest of you, do you have anything to add regarding this process?

R: Yes. Those of us currently attending are long-time participants, for one reason or another. When you have been doing something for so many years, it seems easy and normal to you already, but things move forward like technology, etc. If you are familiar with the whole process from start to the end, there is certainly room for improvement, because for the application to the educational establishment itself, things are made easier and the procedure is easy and good. The application procedure for refunding is quite outdated, however. We have given proposals to the Ministry for improvement options, such as an electronic submission method. Every educational establishment is obliged to have an electronic signature. I do not think it is necessary to print all those 2000 or so sheets every month. For each educational institution, these are 42 sheets for each payment request. Imagine how many sheets this is! This thing goes to the State Fund Agriculture and is manually entered by the clerk and processed. Then they attach it to an ACIS platform, which sends it to Sofia. They start to process it in Sofia and to review the scanned documents, and from there on, the entire document check begins. If there is a software that



sends this data automatically, by pressing a button, when you are ready with the documents, and all this information automatically goes to Sofia, we will skip the moment with the paper submission to the FSRD. This documentation can go directly to Sofia and the whole process can be shortened. This is my opinion.

M: Okay, thank you! This process sounds quite scary.

R: It lasts about 3 months and that is why it is scary. This process that I am explaining is from submitting the documents to the receiving of the money, and it takes at least 3 months. Everyone of the colleagues knows.

M: Okay. Other opinions regarding the application? We will also discuss the refund process a little later.

I turn to the suppliers again: what is the mechanism for choosing the products you distribute in the educational establishments and what are the factors that determine this choice?

R: The factors are: local producers, local suppliers, quality production. All the companies that deliver products, especially fruits, we make sure that they are all local companies, because it is easier and we save on transport.

M: Does the price influence the product selection?

R: Look, if we take the same product at a different price, of course. This is a market economy! Of course, it will have an impact, but the local supplier and quality come first. As you can see, if you are currently filling up with gasoline 95 and the price is different at different gas stations, but the gasoline is the same, which one will you fill up at?! The quality and the local supplier come first. We try to buy from a local producer because if the product is not OK, they replace it immediately. Our company has been working with the same people for years. If there is a problem, it is immediately replaced and so on. Children always get the best that is possible at the given time.

M: Okay.

R: I just want to add. I absolutely agree with the colleague. Our principles of work are the same. Price matters, but sometimes I buy the more expensive one simply because I have no other choice. I am sure it happened to him too, because I know his work. I do not think that the price, in any way, made us neglect the quality. It is exactly the opposite!

Next for product selection is feedback. We seek feedback from schools on a monthly basis. Every month I send a survey with 5 questions to each educational establishment that we supply and I wait for the feedback to make the calculation for the next month. In general, the variety depends on the preference of the principal and, respectively, of the children, because he has the direct feedback.

Our association conducted a general survey in 1300 educational establishments on the territory of Bulgaria, where we saw which product is in the top 5, which product is not preferred, etc. From memory I can say that out of those 1300 schools, about 850 gave banana as the first answer.

M: You have initiated such a survey yourselves?



R: Absolutely by ourselves. Each company distributed the survey to the educational establishments, processed and returned to our association and we made one general processing at national level. There are questions in it about the target groups, how the program should be developed, whether there is diversity, whether the objective has been met and what the main objective is. We did it at our own expense to get feedback from schools and improve our work. That was the purpose of the survey and it worked out pretty well.

M: And what were the results if you want to share?

R: Well, about the target group, to be up to 7th grade. If a brother and sister study in the same school, let's say, and one is in 3rd grade and the other is in 5th grade, one will receive the product and the other will stand and watch it, provided that he received it the previous four years. There is an imbalance, which is not very good. To the question whether the target group should be up to 7th grade, 1,204 schools said yes and 96 said no. This should also be a signal to the Ministry.

As for funds, because they said the funds will not be enough, we will double the organic products at the same amount that we could raise the age of the target group, right? Do you understand what the Ministry prefers? They prefer that children get more organic products, but a limited range of children will get them, and not all children get them fairly. This is just one example.

Apart from that, the results of the survey showed that the objective of the program was met and pedagogical measures were obtained. Just to clarify that this survey reached the schools with which members of our association work. Outside of that circle, I do not know what the situation is. Here, citrus fruits were in the top 5, and the Ministry of Agriculture at the beginning of the year wanted to remove citrus fruits. We are going in a direction where things are not going well. I told you at the beginning of the discussion that I am glad that we are having this discussion because they are inviting the producers, saying that this is a measure that should sponsor the producers and tell them: "Tell us how to amend the Ordinance!". Do you understand that this is like me taking a guy off the street and asking him how I should amend this ordinance, and we who are gathered here now have been working on these programs for 10-12 years and know every single detail how does it need to be changed to make this thing work. That is why things do not work out and never will. Until these people start listening to the principals and suppliers, it will not work. They tell me: "He is a producer and you have to buy from him!", but he is not only an indirect supplier, but I might as well not buy from him tomorrow. How will he then participate in the process? We do not have 5 producers in Bulgaria – we have 20 thousand! This is a problem because the producer says: "I want to sell the Bulgarian goods and that is why we raise them to 75%", but the producer is not aware that we have four different fruits over the month. In December, which producers will give me 4 different products? There is not such, however, the producer, who is not 100% familiar with the scheme, says: "I want 100% Bulgarian product!" We remove the bananas! Oranges will be eaten in Greece!". Such remarks are heard. When you have not gone deep in the problem, you cannot give an adequate opinion.

M: This is exactly what I was going to raise in a while, since in the other discussions the question of the suppliers' concern about the new request for 75% Bulgarian production of the supplies was also raised. I was going to ask you about your opinion and how you think you will handle it



during the winter months when the kids will be eating mostly apples, in fact. How do you see this change, if adopted?

R: I see this change like all changes. Inadequate people make inadequate decisions. If you are familiar with the program and the requirements, you should have some conscience before offering this thing. This cannot happen! We forcefully do something to fulfill someone's request, but we do not care what the consequences will be for the children and the people who deliver, because if I cannot fulfill that 75%, I will not get paid for my work, and children will stop receiving product in December. I do not know who told you that kids will be eating apples all year, because that 75% means we have to stop the supplies when December comes. They will not eat apples for a whole year because I have to stop delivering because I have to deliver three more products. December, January and March I have to stop working and the children will get nothing. Instead of helping children eat Bulgarian products, we will have the opposite effect. We will be working September, October and November, and then we are closing.

M: Okay.

R: I want to add. What struck me is that we cannot deliver apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, carrots, because they are not in season when we should offer them. Also, the profit there is too low. Any normal person who performs this activity also takes the price into consideration. As much as we want to make a variety... This is one of the factors we consider. Attention can be paid to what fruits are supplied. For example, in the winter months there could be three products instead of four. Bulgarian production should be supported, but this should be consistent with what the market can offer, in the end. This is what I wanted to add.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: I also want to say something to support T. We have a great desire to support local production and Bulgarian producers, but the moment, which is extremely important, is that if we do not make these 4 different deliveries, we will not be fully paid for this month by the State Fund Agriculture. Even if an employee messes something up.

One of the best things about this program is that we, as suppliers, are obliged in the accounting period, the production that we have taken from a producer, to be paid for in that accounting period. We will get the corresponding funds from 3 to 4 months after we submit the corresponding documents, i.e. if we cannot fulfill these 4 different deliveries in these winter months, we will go bankrupt. We would have donated the program and the schools. This is it. This is not about opposing Bulgarian production and other. This is about the impossibility, purely mathematically, for us to fulfill this percentage. Not for any other reason, but because we have 3-4 months in which there is no Bulgarian production. These apples you know are picked and stand in freezers. The grapes go quickly as early as September, while the program has not started yet and the students have not entered the schools. By the time we make the new schedules and they sign them, if we manage to make 4 deliveries in September, this is a great heroism. It is almost impossible because of the holidays in this month. There are actually 7-8 days left and we, purely mathematically, have no way of meeting this percentage.

M: What will you do if it happens so?



R: We have often done impossible things under this program. That is why these discussions are held in order to make timely decisions and to avoid critical moments for us. That is why we are having these discussions and that is why we are expressing our statement. Let's hope there will be people who will accept it.

M: Okay. Does anyone else want to add anything to this, both in terms of the product selection mechanism and the issue of raising the percentage of locally produced supplies?

R: The duration of the program is inadequate. 2/3 of the target group finish by May 30, and the duration of the program was extended the last two years until June 30, but 4th grade actually study until June 15. We have no way to remove the fourth classes from the group of distributed products and stretch them in time so that we can catch the spring fruits. This is also not properly considered and formulated in the Ordinance.

Apart from that, the fruits that are "allowed" in the Ordinance – peach, apricot, we cannot give them.

M: Because of the seasonality?

R: What about the cherries, when will we give them?!

R: We dream of cherries. We will give them at price of BGN 30.

M: So, your proposal is to increase the term or to reduce it?

R: The fruits that are included must be in conformity with the school year. Mr. M. very accurately said that there are 7-8 school days in September, and grades 1-3 end on May 30. The hard months for delivery are February, March and April, because then it is difficult to find even quality citrus fruits on the market, not to mention the fruits and vegetables that are included under the Ordinance.

R: Yes. The programs are for fruit and milk, but if vegetables are delivered during the winter months, carrots are a good solution. When we first started, we included carrots and the kids accepted them very well. I do not know why vegetables are not included as well, so that there is variety and to fill up a little during these winter months. Carrots can be used as an option. For us, they start from October, even one year the deliveries started from November, and they end very quickly. For us they end in March. In April, we do not even have any. I mean that it can cover more months from the school time in the schedule. There is a piling of many products for a few months and then there is no more from April onwards. But kindergartens also work during the summer. Couldn't the delivery time be extended in the gardens during the summer months as well? To take less as a percentage in the winter months, and to extend it in the spring and summer months.

R: In the last two years, this accumulation of supplies in these months is not accidental. This is because we often do not know when we will work. You know how many months there was a break. Here we are talking about regulations under this program. If we do not meet the specified number of deliveries in the month, we will not be paid again and will have difficulties. We leave some possibilities for further distribution for subsequent dates. This was the most difficult in these 2 years that today we work and tomorrow we will not work. You, as state institutions, know how in these months no one has left you without funds in these months. So we have not left our



employees either, i.e. we aim to be as flexible as possible. The workload itself in the short terms is too much for us, but we had to leave... Now it is easier for the Red Cross, but this is the issue.

R: Yes. We are not familiar with your points of view and that there must be four deliveries and that they will stop your payment. We do not know these things. I am learning them now. From your point of view, you are in a hurry to fulfill your obligations in order to get the funds, and it becomes a vicious circle – everyone is looking to do their part, and “up” they do not take specific adequate measures. If anything needs to change, this is to change the number of deliveries. Is it not possible that these mandatory supplies are not four, as you say, but three? To be also easier for you...

R: We must all think together, above all, about the children. This survey that our association made is to give children what they love. This will mean that we have fulfilled our task 1000%, meaning the supplier companies, the management of the educational establishments, and the Ministry. In order to accomplish this, we need to see what children like, what is healthy and good for them, and start the Ordinance from there.

R: This, in fact, is the objective of the schemes, isn't it?

R: That's right! They are aimed at building healthy eating habits in children.

R: And to get used to eating such things. Especially the little ones, they still do not know how to eat such things. Some are unfamiliar to them and that is exactly what we are teaching them. We have our methods – games and things like that. We give them the start in life to learn rational and healthy eating. It is good as programs, but the question is also to work well. They are well planned, but ill-conceived.

M: Okay. How would you rate the reimbursement process? Do you have anything to add to what has already been said on this matter?

R: I can talk a lot about this topic. In short, I can say that I am glad that such a meeting took place, because the principals of educational establishments are not familiar with our requirements and this is not their job. They are pedagogues and have a completely different purpose and activity. They do not know exactly how things are with us and we do not know how things are with them. These meetings are exactly the moment to clarify things.

It is not normal for me to wait 8 months for one payment. We have had a year that I want to talk about a lot, in the free questions part. Then all the producers have been condemned by the state and by us. Someone gives a signal that I have committed fraud in the educational institution. A passer-by saw something, went to the prosecutor's office and filed a report. The State Fund Agriculture say: “You are being checked by the Prosecutor's Office and you will not receive money!” and it happens that I have applied for reimbursement of expenses and for 8 months I have not received anything. I do not know if you can imagine what that means to a family and to a business. What it means for 8 months to pay goods, pay salaries, pay fuel, pay VAT to the state and not get a penny refunded because someone decided to file a signal. It is good that there is a deadline of 3 months, but this deadline can be extended if there is something. Do you understand that this is a signal?! It may not be substantial, you may not have committed a violation, but when the court establishes it, only then will they start reimbursing your expenses. Even if you have committed some fraud, should all funds be stopped and leave you with nothing



to do? If we have to talk about the personal problem, you have a family, after all, and you have to leave something on the table when you go home. This was done by the producers, you know?

Apart from that, the reimbursement process is slow and outdated. There is room for improvement. Most of our colleagues have made software and programs. Almost nothing is counted by a calculator or by hand anymore. Everything is written by a program that does my monthly documents in 20 minutes. This information that my program gives me, I can submit to the State Fund Agriculture with one button and avoid this whole process of collecting signatures from every principal, etc. The principals will tell you how many documents they need to sign in order to close the month. A signature and stamp are placed on the taking-over protocols against each delivery. They have four documents that are related to the supplies, as a whole, which they also sign and stamp. All these documents are in triplicate – one for them, one for us and one for the State Fund Agriculture. If this is submitted electronically and they electronically sign the document after they find out that everything is in order, and I send this document electronically to the State Fund Agriculture, we save 5 days of going around and collecting signatures, we skip technical errors, we save nerves to wait in the offices. Then I go to the regional directorate of the State Fund Agriculture, where an employee begins to process all this information and submit the documents to Sofia. I cannot understand why they do not want flexibility! We have suggested this as a proposal, but they think about 70% Bulgarian products and their stories, which are completely untenable, and not how to improve things related to the program.

M: Okay, thank you! Does anyone else want to add anything about the refunding process?

How would you rate, in general, the communication with the State Fund Agriculture? Is there room for improvement in your relationship with the fund?

R: I want to say that the communication with the State Fund Agriculture has always been very good. I work also with other state institutions, but I have no problem with communication with the employees of the State Fund Agriculture. There is always room for improvement, but I think that the documents and the procedures themselves should be made easier, but the communication with the employees is very good, whether you know them or not.

M: Okay, thank you! Other opinions?

R: I fully support the colleagues. We have been at meetings with the State Fund Agriculture regarding this change that is forthcoming and they say they feel like they are between a rock and a hard place because they say: "The Ministry is now imposing some rules that we will have to follow, meaning that if you do not fulfill this 70%, we will have to cut your money. You will start suing us, and so the Ministry will bring us into a closed cycle of complaints, cutting amounts and so on." On the other hand, we are also between a rock and a hard place because how can I explain to the educational establishment that until November I will work and make 10 deliveries a month and they will start throwing away because the kids cannot consume such an amount. On the other hand, how will I explain to the Ministry that I will not fulfill this 70%? They will make the relations between the suppliers and the State Fund Agriculture worse, because I can tell you that we have requested information from the Agriculture State Fund to which they have replied and currently the requirement is for 50% Bulgarian production. For this school year, we have 18 applicants who have had their payments cut because they did not meet this 50% requirement.



Can you imagine that 20% of all applicants are rejected for this reason, and with 70% Bulgarian production, what percentage of applicants will not be able to fulfill it?! I say again that this is aimed again at the big ones. I am sure that I will still make some miracles to fulfill all the requirements, but what will the small companies do who have a hard time finding goods because of the quantities they take. Should they go out of business and go bankrupt? I give an example with a colleague from Sliven, who is supplying only one primary school. He keeps the school shop, the canteen and supplies the fruits and the milk. He takes 50 kg for each delivery. He tells me that when the regional products are over, he cannot go to Plovdiv for 50 kg to get grapes or something, because he will pay more for fuel than he will be reimbursed for the grapes. What will he do? There is no thought in what they are trying to do.

3 years ago we had a meeting with a gentleman who is an apple producer and he wanted the supplies to be 100% Bulgarian. When asked what he produces, he said he is producing apples. And where will he get the other 3 fruits? They have no idea what requirements there are to give adequate suggestions.

M: Thank you! Now I have a question for the representatives of educational establishments.

Could you tell me whether the parents are aware of the school schemes and how they are informed about the implementation of the schemes? What kind of feedback do you obtain from them?

R: When the program started, just informative. Then we got some boards that we placed at the entrance. Thus, the parents got acquainted visually. Those who are interested read and ask, and we explain. So they are aware that these schemes exist. Children also provide a feedback with the parents by telling them what they ate today.

M: And do you get feedback from the parents themselves?

R: They have no idea. Kids are consuming it at the moment. If the children in the older groups are asked a question at home, they can say, but the parents have no idea of the distribution itself. They do not enter the kindergarten and do not have access to the kitchen. It is only informative. It may be different for schools, but it is like this for us.

M: Okay, thank you! And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and dairy products organized in schools ?

R: We recently had a visit by an art theater precisely in connection with healthy eating. Other extracurricular activities – just some games with the elder kids. Little children are given pictures to identify fruits and vegetables. I do not know what else. Generally, we have not organized.

M: And how would organizing a visit to farms and orchards, where they get to know the production process be accepted?

R: Since we are in a village, our children constantly see fruits and vegetables everywhere in the yards, they are familiar with them directly and daily. You do not have to go especially to a farm. We are in such an environment every day.

M: I see.



Now I have a question for all participants. In your opinion, do the schemes contribute to increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products by children?

R: Of course! They contribute a lot. We have many children of Roma origin who cannot afford to eat on a daily basis and 40-50% only do so in the kindergarten.

M: And do they contribute to the achievement of better and sustainable healthy eating habits?

R: Yes. Even if it happens some time that the scheme has already ended, they look for the snack at 10 o'clock. We still give them, but less in quantity, while under the "School fruit" and "School milk" schemes, they get much more in quantity. Children themselves are used to taking more in quantity. It is given to others if someone is absent, so they want more and more. We have had cases where children did not perceive a fruit at all at first, but when they saw other children eating, they started too. That is a big plus. It is very well thought out, but these messes and senseless new requirements for 70% delivery of Bulgarian production must be cleared up. It is good to stimulate the Bulgarian producers, but the suppliers themselves should be facilitated somehow, because, as I hear, they encounter enormous difficulties and take enormous risks, just to satisfy the requirements of the ordinances. Those who come up with these ordinances must necessarily coordinate with the suppliers and hear their opinion. Not only to hear it, but to consider it. If you can transmit all this and make it true, it will not be bad at all.

M: Okay, thank you! The rest, what do you think? Are the schemes achieving their purpose?

R: As long as they are eagerly awaited! Now we also give honey, and you know that honey is consumed much more in Europe. Here also the children got used to tasting real honey, because there are no compromises here. We are talking about all suppliers that supply honey. This is a great Bulgarian product and really many of the children had not ever tried it. Since they had not tried it, they do not want to, but now we succeeded there too. The programs are successful and are very valuable for all children. If it is extended to 7th grade, it will be excellent. As the lady before said, you should know that we also operate in large schools, and there are children there for whom it is like extra food that they cannot afford. We are providing for everyone thanks to the program, so by all means these programs should continue.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: I would like to add, as a mother and as a psychologist, which is my other profession, that I would like children to be introduced to more different products. The focus should not be only on the type of producer and this restriction of fruits that we implement, because entirely as an idea the children can be introduced by the teachers to the different fruits and vegetables – where they are grown, what their characteristics are, what their taste is. If the range of the offered products is extended, it will be much more beneficial for them to recognize how different fruits taste and to enrich their knowledge of fruits, vegetables, honey and milk.

M: Okay. Do you have any other suggestions that could happen within the schemes to improve eating habits and their sustainability over time?

R: I just want to add something that we have not paid attention to for years because we are engaged in some other cases. The accompanying measures are great, but they are inaccessible



for schools. Attention should be paid on that and thus many children will be engaged in the program. At the moment, the accompanying measures are not applicable by schools.

M: Why?

R: That's how they are made and there is no information to the principal so as to organize them together.

M: Okay. Other opinions?

R: I absolutely support the colleague, because if we have to learn from somewhere, it will most likely be from Europe, because there this program has been implemented since 1967, and here since 2010. There, the share of accompanying measures represents 15% of the whole budget. This year we take from the budget of our association, in partnership with "Bukledaria" and every month we buy pedagogical measures that we send to educational establishments, which are in the form of fairy tales, wishes for Christmas, things to cut out, to color, about the benefits of fruits, but this is a drop compared to what can be achieved, because there are indeed good practices in Europe that can be taken into account.

I have always been of the opinion that history should be remembered. Before all these problems with the producers started, because we could not clarify the topic, before 2015 in Bulgaria there were many more products that could be supplied and it did not matter at all whether they would be Bulgarian, whether they would be 5 a month or 2. There were no such restrictions, and in 2015, Bulgaria was in third place in Europe in terms of the program's success rate. Also Belgium has sent an inquiry to our country how we managed to get such a high success rate. I can tell you why. Because then there were no such restrictions, and the schools' requests for what to receive, how to receive it and when to receive it were respected. We have even delivered peppers to some kindergartens that wanted them as a product. All these requirements that are imposed narrow the circle and the success rate drops accordingly, because it is measured in how satisfied the children are, to what percentage the budget from Europe has been absorbed, etc. Here these indicators are dropping because there are people who are cut. There are people who cannot comply. There are schools that are not happy because they get a lot of apples in the winter months, etc. these are limitations that... Do you realize how much the focus has shifted?! I have always said that the focus of this program is the children. It can be also to stimulate production, but this should be the drop in the ocean, not the main thing. Only and only to stimulate production, we lose all other things. What will the child understand if only an apple is given to him?! Well, they start throwing them directly into the bin because they are sick of these apples. We should really think about what the children want and we should work in this direction. Not what corporate or private interest wants, but what the children want.

We even wanted to make a survey covering 200,000 children participating in the program through our association, but there we encountered difficulties in terms of age group, etc. We did not know from a legal point of view if we had the right to do things like that, but really the opinion of the children and the parents should be taken into account. I want to tell you that my opinion is that more than 90% of parents can hardly understand the problem. They are familiar with the program, they know what it is about, but they can hardly get to the bottom of the problem. Again, because of the state, the attitude of the parents towards us, as suppliers, is



made worse, because the requirements they put, that we supply things that... The parent sees that the child receives an apple three times in a row and he says to himself: "Why only an apple is supplied?" and he is not aware that the state obliges you to do this. Indeed, in the last 7-8 years in Bulgaria, the focus of this program has been shifted. Until we get the focus back on the kids, we will not improve the pedagogical measures, parent attitudes toward the program, or child attitudes.

M: And what was different in 2015, except that there was no such restriction on domestic producers?

R: Everything was easier because there were not so many requirements. That is the main thing. When you do not have a requirement for four different products, as the kindergarten lady said, when she asks for a carrot, she gets a carrot. When she asks for any product, she will get that product. When I want to supply an imported product, I will supply an imported product because I will not have to worry about the requirement of the Ordinance. These things need to be improved. Even if four different ones remain, the percentage of the Bulgarian products should drop. Even if they do not want to do it that way, at least in the winter months they must do it. This 70% is achievable in the first three months, as I said at the beginning. From there on, the percentage should be between 30 and 40 so that we do not overwhelm them with apples.

Next, we have a quantitative problem. I have been denied delivery of carrots when I wanted to make such. I even have proof with email correspondence that the producer refuses to fulfill my request by letter and then I go looking for some other product. This is the quantity factor. I need about 2000 kg of products for one delivery to fulfill it. What if the producer is unable to provide it for me, how will I supply it? There are several factors that the Ministry has not been thinking in the right direction for some time.

R: I would like to add for the accompanying measures that we also had fairy tales provided by the supplier and coloring pictures. I have a proposal, if they insist so much on the Bulgarian production, as we all do by the way, let it be like this: honey, milk and dairy products should be Bulgarian, but fruits and vegetables should be possible for suppliers to pick up from different places. Or that the percentage is fixed. Let it be 50% Bulgarian production in the fall, and another percentage in the other months. It is best to have no percentage at all. There is a lot of honey and a lot of milk in Bulgaria – it is possible to fulfill it, but for fruits and vegetables, let another decision be made.

M: Okay, thank you! Do you think that the implementation of the school schemes meets the needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of children and is there more to be done in this regard?

R: As I have already said, we have quite a few such children. I do not think a distinction should be made between children from vulnerable groups and the other children. Everyone should receive equally. The policy in the state is wrong, in relation to the attitude towards children in Bulgaria. One should not be launched at the expense of the other.

M: Meaning children should not be prioritized...

R: Everyone same shall be given the same.



M: Okay. We talked a lot during the conversation, but if we could summarize or add regarding the products that are described in the Ordinance at the moment. In your opinion, are there any products that should be added to this list or any that should be removed? Which are they?

R: We talked about the problem with peach, apricot and cherry. It is very difficult to supply them, but there is some small probability. If we are talking about removing certain products, that to me is a detriment to the kids and to the suppliers because it is an option if you can find it and deliver it. There was a good year for the cherry and there was one opportunity at the end of May to make a delivery on the verge of a loss, but it could be done for the sake of the children. If we have to talk about additional products, the best option is juices, in my opinion. They can be natural, freshly squeezed, etc., offered in a suitable package. There is another problem here that it would be much more appealing to the children, and it is not known whether it would have the opposite effect of children only drinking the juices and leaving the fruit to one side or throwing it away. It has to be thought about. The Ministry of Health must be involved in the discussion of such issues, as well as the principals of the educational establishments, because they are the link between the children and us.

R: I think some citrus fruits should be added. To think about the actual price of the cucumber in the winter period, for the carrot, because these are things that we can supply. Speaking of producers, you know what happened with the fuel and electricity price increase and how all greenhouses stopped working and refused to fulfill any request. The price of the cucumber in the winter period, due to the fact that it is from a greenhouse, reached insane prices. In this regard, an up-to-date price for the relevant period should be considered.

M: Okay. Does anyone have anything to add?

We have said several times that there is a need to expand the target group. Do you have anything to add regarding target groups? Are they appropriate, should they be expanded and in what way?

R: We have said several times that it would be great if they make it to 7th grade. This is the age when we can form healthy eating habits in children.

M: Okay. I have run out of questions. If you have something to share, you can share it now?

R: Is it possible to cover more months in kindergartens? The kindergarten school hours are until the end of May, but can this schedule be extended into June, for example??

R: We have 50 deliveries to complete between September and May when there are approximately 165 study days if we do not count extraordinary holidays and Covid. Simply, the problem is quantitative. If we count, 1/3 is the ratio, and that is why supplies run out faster. We make 2 deliveries per week, which is a requirement of the Ordinance, and there comes a point when you run out of supplies. The other point, very important, is that I would not prefer to extend them in time, because we have Covid in these years. Certainly, the schools are not that familiar with what is happening here with Covid. You cannot order the products today and deliver it tomorrow. At least in our company this cannot happen. I have a minimum of 3 days of processing these products, to package them, individually wrap them and arrange them. I have ordered X pieces of yogurt, X pieces of milk, which must stay in the freezer so that I can deliver it immediately, and X numbers of apples and oranges. They are closing us down because of Covid



and I have to throw all these products away. There is nothing I can do with it, because that is what it is intended for. It cannot enter the retail stores, because there is no store that will buy a 30 g piece of yellow cheese. It is intended for the school schemes. It is not intended to be sold in stores. In this regard, we make the schedules in such a way that we have a tolerance, i.e. if we are closed in November, I can transfer these deliveries for May. If I spread out my supplies to the bare minimum, I can make it to May with supplies, let's say. However, if they shut us down somehow, I can hardly maneuver and fulfill my supplies so that I can react to Covid. If someone can guarantee me that there will be no Covid next year, I can certainly change my schedule somehow. This is related again to all the requirements, etc.

Another issue I want to raise is that we are supplying schools and kindergartens. Schools end on May 30th. When I make a request, I try to keep it together, because otherwise I lose the thread of the requirements that I have to meet. If I make different schedules for the schools and for the kindergartens, I can get confused about whether I have done all four, whether I have followed the different requirements for the schools and the kindergartens. I am starting to work as two separate companies, because I have reached a point with kindergartens, but for schools I have already lost the situation, for which I can be sanctioned. That is why we make them together, because the same delivery goes to the school and the kindergarten. I know that this month I have done four different ones, I have complied with the requirements of the Ordinance, I have given 50% Bulgarian product, etc., and things are going well. If I start mismatching them and giving different products at different times, it becomes very complicated for me. Some option can be considered, but there really needs to be an understanding by the Ministry, regarding the requirements.

R: I meant that they should be aligned with those for the schools and the kindergartens should also receive them at least until the end of May, because we do not have supplies in May. It is easier for you too if they are the same. Plus, the truck comes to the kindergarten and then goes to the school.

R: Speaking for myself, my deliveries this year ended on May 31st. That was my last delivery. When they shut down in November, I had fulfilled my schedule until April. The kindergartens were open, but the schools closed in November. Then I sent a letter to all the kindergartens and explained to them that I will not supply the whole of November for them either, but I will transfer it to May, just so that I will not lose track of deliveries. My schedule was empty in November, but on the account of that, it was full the entire May. These are agreements between the principal and the supplier, as well as collective compliance with the requirements.

R: This schedule is approved by the State Fund Agriculture, is it not? When it is still being prepared, it is good that the schedule is until the end of May. Indeed, it cannot start from September, but from October to May is an ideal option.

R: Everything depends on the requirements of the Ordinance. If there are no such aggravating circumstances, there is no problem for this thing to happen. I am worried, however, whether I will meet the requirements. I want to start in September. I want to start with as many deliveries of fruits as possible, because in September there are prunes, grapes, peaches, apples, pears – so many Bulgarian products that can be delivered. In October, grapes, plums and peaches disappear already, so these are 2-3 strong months for me, in which I can make 30 deliveries of Bulgarian



products and then I can feel calm that I have met at least this requirement. The state pressures you to do things that are not good for the educational establishments, because you stuff them with goods, but you have to feel somehow calm and you have to know that you have fulfilled one of all the requirements. If there is no requirement for 50% Bulgarian products, it is not a problem for me to carry 3-4 deliveries a month and supply them until July, excluding schools, because they end on May 31st.

R: We hope to be heard!

R: To tell you honestly, about being heard, especially for this Ordinance, I have entered 18 letters to the Ministry with an incoming number, with opinions. We have taken the opinion of principals we work with, we have taken the opinion of parents, we have taken the opinion of 9 organizations of producers in Bulgaria, with whom we held a joint meeting in Plovdiv in February, at which they explicitly said that they would not be able to fulfill this 70%. We signed an agreement, entered it in the Ministry, etc. We have talked about these things, but at this moment I have no hope of being heard. We have done a lot of work to be heard but to no avail.

Separately, our association applied to a committee of the Parliament, where we were elected to chair the Healthy Lifestyle sector. There too, in the Committee on direct participation of citizens and interaction with civil society, we have expressed our opinion and our conviction about how things should happen. All the other sectors of the Committee agreed, but I have lost hope because I can see what the mood is. They have got it into their head and they will do it.

R: This is very bad!

M: Okay. Do you have other comments, opinions and suggestions?

R: I have a proposal for the principals of the educational establishments. I agree that it is not their job as they have many other tasks, but they too should want to understand what our problems are and be more proactive. I want to say that the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health have abdicated from this Ordinance and do not care at all what is happening. Only the Ministry of Agriculture makes the amendments, although they have a 33% weight, since all three ministries are bound by this Ordinance. If the directors support the views of the suppliers, which is absolutely normal, because we are the direct applicants to the program, either way, things have to happen.

At the moment, the EU regulation is being drafted and I have some hope that at least there things will happen as they should, and at least there they will not allow the member states to choose absolutely everything by themselves, and some things will be forbidden yet at European level. You said about honey and yogurt that they must be Bulgarian – they are Bulgarian because milk is according to BDS, and honey must also be Bulgarian, so we have no problem with these products because they are in large quantities. After all, we are a free market and the state, with some things it does, violates a number of laws, because the European market is common. We cannot separate things.

Do you think that the Ministry of Agriculture really wanted to support the producers or protect a corporate interest? You have a “Fruits and vegetables” item in a public procurement in the kindergarten, don’t you? There, the state pays 100% and there is no European funding, right? I want to ask: is there a requirement for the supplier to bring you Bulgarian fruits and vegetables?



R: No, there is not.

R: That's it! So, where the state pays 100%, we can deliver Polish apples, Greek tangerines, however, where Europe co-finances the program, we must bring 100% Bulgarian! Do you understand that their goal is not to stimulate Bulgarian production, but to stimulate certain economic operators. It is absurd for small producers to participate in this program. Only in certain months we can supply their goods and that is what we try to do. The small producer cannot store. He wants to pick it and sell it. If he does not sell it to the schools, he will sell it somewhere else because he does not have a refrigerator and a built storage. This thing is done because of corporate interests of large fruit and vegetable producers. For the same amount of the budget, they could include children up to 7th grade into the target group, but they chose to double the organic supply, and it costs the same as money.

This is also very important to be known about public procurements because under public procurements kindergartens can receive only imported fruits and vegetables and under school schemes we have certain percentages of aggravating etc., which I believe is not normal. If the state wanted to stimulate something, it would stimulate where it pays and where Europe is not involved at all. Everyone can make a conclusion about what interest it is about and whether anyone here is interested in children at all!

R: You are absolutely right. We agree with you, but we do not know what we can do about it.

R: I think that you as a guild should have the decisive say. You have your organization presidents, etc. For example, Mr. Stamatov has supported me, but they do not take it to heart. I say again that you have another job and it is not your main activity to build eating habits in children, but you should express your opinion more loudly, because really your opinion is not heard about these programs. I cannot understand why the manufacturers should write the ordinance that we will implement!

R: Yes, it is so.

M: Other opinions?

R: We touched on a lot of the things I wanted to The predictability of the target group is the most difficult for me. If possible, to have or access to ... I do not know exactly how things happen, but I cannot be told today that from tomorrow the target group is with 5 more children. We have foreseen fruits, vegetables or milk, we have ordered them, they are loaded and the next moment it turns out that the quantity is different. We almost never get paid for these differences, and it is not our fault that the principal or whoever is responsible forgot or anything. This makes our work difficult very much.

Apart from that, during the rotation, we undertook on our own to deliver during the rotation, i.e. half of the children, who were at school, received the corresponding production, and for the next week we planned for the rest, i.e. to fulfill the whole delivery. When inspected by the State Fund Agriculture they said: "Here the social factor is not important and you should have delivered only as many as the children", which surprised us, because there is no way to divide the children to present and others. We made our deliveries in accordance with the principle announced by the Ministry.



The third thing that had arisen as a case: there is some overlapping between nursery and first group. There are children who are in the first group, but they are of nursery age. I do not know exactly how the matter stands, but it happened so that the target number given to us by the kindergarten turned out to be that we supplied a nursery group, for which we were automatically penalized.

The expiration date of milk also makes it difficult for us. We buy from a company where the shelf life is 6 days, i.e. it has to be produced, taken to the warehouse, delivered to our warehouse, get distributed, and we are on the edge. There are 2 days to deliver it and it becomes impossible, but again it is not our fault.

R: By standard, the expiration time of milk is 6 days.

R: Yes, but it is very difficult to do this additional supply. If 20 children are currently absent, those 20 milks will expire. We do not have the option to additionally supply it when they are back, but otherwise we get penalized.

The last thing I will say is about the difficulty of collecting signatures at the end of each month. If there is an option to do it electronically, certified “True to Original” and some similar way, because this is a nightmare. It even got to the point of looking for the principals at their homes, because we have to fulfill these 10 days on time, and this is an extremely short deadline.

This is from me.

M: Thank you! Does anyone else want to say anything before we wrap up?

R: Maybe there was some confusion. In principle, we have to deliver under the Ordinance to the children who are enrolled in the educational establishment and the fruits and vegetables of those who are absent, must be distributed among the absent children, and the milk and dairy products must be given on the next day to the children who are present. This is from health point of view, because the portion of the dairy product is the one that a child should take per day and therefore cannot be distributed on the same day, but it must be on the next. There is no limit to the fruit, because they contain only useful vitamins, no allergens, etc. and may be distributed among the children. That is, we do not deliver them to the number of children who are present, but we deliver them to the number of children who are enrolled in the educational establishment and already in the educational establishment they do this distribution of the milk and the fruits.

R: Yes, you are right. I meant that we have 520 children who are enrolled in school and the Ministry of Agriculture tells us: “You must delivery for the whole number.” We deliver, but there are quarantined classes and the principal says it is impossible to additionally distribute them the next day because they are already overflowing with products. We have had cases when principals wrote to us saying they want the program to stop for a while, just because of the current environment. I am not saying that this is how it happens in practice, but because of Covid it was not organized well, in general.

R: It was like that. I suspended all deliveries during this period. With the same letter, bilaterally signed between me and the principals, in relation to Covid, I wrote that I will suspend the supply until the situation normalizes. I agree that from a regulatory point of view things were far from settled with Covid.



R: Yes. And we will do so this year, if necessary.

R: Let's hope it will not be necessary.

R: Yes.

M: Okay. Other comments or opinions?

Then, thank you for your participation, for your thoroughness! You are all for the same cause, so I hope what we are doing has a result and things happen! I wish you a successful day and a nice weekend!

R: Same to you!

R: Thank you! Goodbye!

R: Goodbye!

7.3.6 Southwest Region, 28.07.2022

M: I would like each of you to introduce yourself very briefly, you do not have to cite your institution, you can just say whether you are a supplier or an educational institution. Who wants to start?

R: I can start. My name is A. V. and I am a representative of a trading company that has been a supplier to the School Fruit and School Milk programs since 2012. I previously worked on the same programs in another company. I would like to say that I welcome what is happening because in all these years this is the first time that I have been invited to have my opinion heard.

M: I am glad to hear it. The others can also add for how long they have been a stakeholder in the schemes. Thank you!

R: My name is G. K. and I am a supplier. We have been dealing with fruit and milk deliveries since the program exists.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! I am P. K. and am the principal of a specialized educational institution. We have been working on the program for years. I cannot remember exactly how many.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Hello! My name is D. K. and I represent kindergarten. Nice to meet you!

M: How long have you been a stakeholder in the schemes?

R: For about 3 years. The administrators are also here with me, if specific questions need to be answered.

M: Okay. Mrs. E. Y. is left.

R: Hello! I am a principal of a kindergarten. We have been working on the scheme for many years.

M: Okay, thank you!



The questions are formulated so that some are specifically aimed at suppliers, others are just for educational establishments, and there are also some that are general to all. I suggest we start with the suppliers.

Could you share how you would rate the application process? Is the information you have when applying sufficient, is it clear? Do you have any comments on this?

R: I think that the information provided by the State Fund Agriculture when applying is sufficiently complete and clear. What I would appeal to is, if possible, that the documents and the application forms be published a little earlier, because at the last minute there is a panic and you have to react a little faster. What I can also wish for is that one day we will be able to apply online and not have to submit paper documents to the State Fund Agriculture.

M: And how much earlier do you think it is necessary to start the application process?

R: I remember now the declaration with which the application is made. I do not remember now exactly under which article it is, but it must be signed by every principal of an educational institution, and the declaration in question is changed every year. There are minor corrections to the declaration itself, necessitating waiting for the form in question until the last minute so that we can collect the confirmation and signatures from the principals.

M: Okay, thank you! Other opinions?

R: I would add something. I agree with what was said. In my opinion, it is unnecessary to submit the schedules from each educational establishment when applying. After the approval by the State Fund Agriculture, if there is a correction, all the vacations for the next year have not yet been released, and it is unnecessary to sign these schedules during the application itself. This year, for example, it is expected that there will be an increase in organic products from 6 to 12, from which it follows that even if everything is fine for us in this schedule, once we are approved, we will have to wait for the new Ordinance to be released and sign schedules again. This is an additional aggravation for us, and also for the principals themselves.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: Can I join in too?

M: Please, go ahead!

R: As the administrators are here with me and we comment that without the schedules, they cannot order the fruits right. Sometimes the two fruits are duplicated. That way, they figure out what other fruit to order.

R: I understand. There will be a schedule, but the question is that it should not be during the application in May, because we submit the application documents then. There will be a schedule at the end of August or September. Especially for us, the program starts in October, so for each month, especially our company, clarifies what fruits, what milk will be delivered for the month, so that educational establishments make sure not to duplicate fruits and dairy products.

M: Okay. Does anyone else want to add anything to this general application issue?

R: I just want to add. I fully support the colleague on the schedules in question. I made a note to call the attention to these schedules, but I forgot it. This is an absolutely unnecessary



bureaucracy, now to prepare and make something that we are sure will change and that we will have to do again when starting the work. It is not a question to cancel the schedules, it is a question of not submitting them when applying, but submitting them when deliveries begin.

M: Okay. Could you tell me what is the mechanism for selecting the products that you distribute to educational establishments? What are the factors that determine this selection?

R: For me, the main thing in determining the products is that they will be consumed by the children. In order to remain in the market as a company to supply these products, we strive to select the best possible products on the market. We try to have maximum variety, according to what is in the program and the framework that is put in place, but for us the leading thing is what will be consumed and what is the best possible on the market. We work mainly with Bulgarian producers, with the exception of the fruits that are imported from abroad. Of course, we also consider the price. However, there must be some economic interest, but the main thing is to deliver products that are desired by children and are convenient for consumption, so that they can comfortably eat it and we do not have any problems with the educational establishment itself. This is leading for us.

M: Okay, thank you! For you, Mrs. K., what are the main factors when choosing the products you supply?

R: I would also say that quality comes first, but with these organic products, the number of which currently increases to 12, I do not know what kind of organic products the colleagues work with, but for us they are mostly apples and pears. With the requirement that 50% are from a farmer, somehow the apples and pears are too much as quantity. Maybe because we start the program in October. In September there is a little more variety. At one point it turns out that no matter how much we care about quality, having to meet the requirement of 50% from a farmer and 12 supplies from an organic producer, at a later point in time – by December and January, the products are no longer in the appearance in which they are picked up. No matter how good the storage is, and no matter how much we want it to be the best, it gets a little harder as time goes on. Basically, we try to supply products with good quality. Of course, organic products are a little more expensive, but so far we fit in both prices and quality.

M: What do you mean regarding quality during winter?

R: During storage in the freezers, the fruits simply dry out. We even had an inspection in May by the State Fund Agriculture and the apples themselves had already dried up. The apple is huge! It can be seen that it was 300 g, and when we supplied it, it was 50 g. Just the fruits get dry in the freezers. I do not know how they are stored, but they just change the look and quality.

M: And what would be the solution to this problem, in your opinion?

R: It is hard to say, because these fruits are picked up in large quantities and must be stored somehow. Regarding storage, I do not know what is best. I am not competent in this matter. It is normal! And at home, when we pick up the fruits, after a while they are not of the same quality as when we picked them.

M: Since this is the last such group discussion we are organizing, your colleagues from other cities were very worried that the percentage of supply from Bulgarian producers could be



increased from 50% to 75% and expressed concern that they would hardly be able to comply during the winter months with the condition of four products and these products to be 75% from Bulgarian producers. What do you think on that matter?

R: I absolutely agree! 75% is already too much and the children are getting fed up of apples and pears. Unfortunately, there comes a point where they just play with the fruit instead of eating it. Winter is hard to supply this, given that there are fresh bananas, oranges and tangerines on the market, and this is what is good for children to consume in winter. It will be hard for us to fulfill this 75%. At least that is what I think.

M: Mr. V., what do you think about it?

R: I fully support my colleague that this percentage and the increase in the percentage will be difficult to implement in practice. In the period in which we work – from the beginning of October to May, I can say that the main product that is offered in Bulgaria by an agricultural producer is apple. In the period in which we work – from the beginning of October to May, I can say that the main product that is offered in Bulgaria by an agricultural producer is apple. For me, the goal is to teach these children's tastes, to be able to eat quality products, to get used to their taste, so that they can then look for it themselves. At least I think that's the objective of the program, and with this thing will have the exact opposite effect. We should not put producers, suppliers, etc. on first place. The child must come first, because that is the point of this program. Everything else should be ranked behind, after the main priority.

It will be difficult for me too. There are still not that many producers in Bulgaria.

I also want to join to my colleague's previous comment that she has a problem with produce and apples. I have had too. Different suppliers and producers should be tried, so that if there is a problem, they can just be replaced and thus supply really quality product. I do exactly that. I am looking to work with several producers, and in this way, the child gets a really high-quality product, without apologizing and looking for excuses.

M: Okay, thank you! And how would you rate the process of reimbursement of eligible costs? Is it effective, does it meet your needs?

R: Yes. Currently it meets them, although we have had various problems over the years. I guess you are familiar with this thing. A different change in methodology that led to declines. Things were OK, but from this year, with all these increases in electricity and fuel prices, of course the producer will increase the price, both for storage and collection. In my opinion, things will lead to a higher cost of the product that we have to deliver. This must be taken into account by the authorities.

M: Okay. Any other opinions on the reimbursement process?

R: Exactly with this dynamic in prices the State Fund Agriculture must comply and change the prices during the school year itself, if necessary. What is set currently is no guarantees. We have had cases when the price of the product we buy is higher than what the State Fund Agriculture pays us.

M: How often does this happen? Is it the practice or the exception?



R: No, it is an exception, but I am giving it as an example because it is very possible to happen from now on. Prices are announced pretty late. Even October is difficult to submit documents, because the prices become clear either at the end of October or at the beginning of November, but there should be an option for the State Fund Agriculture to update the prices if necessary. Maybe, and I hope, there will be a decrease in prices, but it might turn out that in order to fulfill our program, we have to pay more than the State Fund Agriculture pays us.

M: Okay, thank you! If you have nothing to add on this topic, may I continue?

Now I have a question for educational establishments: are parents familiar with the schemes and how does information about the implementation of the School Fruit and School Milk schemes reach them?

R: Posters are placed at the entrance of the kindergarten to show that the kindergarten participates in the School fruit and School milk schemes. Parents ask and we tell them. Apart from that, there are activities for healthy eating in the groups, so all parents are aware that there is such a program in the kindergarten.

M: Is there anything that you think needs to be changed or improved in terms of the communication link between parents and schemes?

R: The parent doesn't care about the problems of the schemes or the principal. The parent wants his child to eat quality food. We do not communicate at the level of explaining the School Fruit and School Milk programs to them. They just want their children to be taken care of with quality products in the kindergarten.

M: Okay, thank you! Other opinions? How are parents informed in schools?

R: Children with mental retardation and various disabilities, some of whom are on special diets, are educated in our center. Especially for the fruits, I have no information about anyone having an allergy or anything like that. Not everyone consumes the milk, but they put it in their bags and take it home.

Apart from that, we inform the parents yet at the first parents' meeting. If anyone is interested, as there are posters at the entrance and on each floor, we inform them. They know, but to be honest, they have not shown any particular interest. For us the emphasis is also on quality – to see that the children are eating healthily something that is healthy for them.

Basically, the idea is very good and we have been working on this program for a long time. Indeed, sometimes some fruits such as tangerines and oranges are not stored well and we have to throw them away, unfortunately. In general, the idea and its implementation are very good.

M: Okay, thank you! Does anyone else want to join in on this matter? And are extracurricular activities aimed at enriching the knowledge of students about the need for a diverse intake of fruits, vegetables and dairy products organized in schools ?

R: Hello! Let me join too. I am M. I. from a school in the village of Rudartsi. I will not repeat what the ladies have already said. We also have posters. Our parents were informed through a survey where they had to determine whether the free snack we give would be additional or basic, and there we informed them in detail about the fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products we



provide and will provide to students. We have not taken them to a farm, but quite often, especially the colleagues in the all-day organization, make quizzes, themed days, draw on the subject and make exhibitions. Regarding visiting farms... there is not one close by in the area, so it is more complicated with transportation and all that organization, but it is not a problem to visit one such farm or fruit and vegetable field in the future.

M: Okay, thank you! In general, how would you rate the communication with the State Fund Agriculture? What can be improved and how do you define the communication with the Fund?

R: At present the submission of documents itself is quite simplified. In past years, a very large set was requested when submitting the payment application. Now things are very simplified. When I need information and advice, I contact the State Fund Agriculture and I am definitely satisfied with the colleagues, because they always guided me correctly on how to do my job. If they are not aware at the moment, they researched things and got back to me, so I am satisfied with the communication with the employees of the State Fund Agricultural.

M: Okay.

R: Me too. I work with Regional Directorate – Sofia and I can say that when submitting the documents, the communication is perfect. The department is wonderful. Now we have known each other for years already, but I have very good work and very good communication with them. My only recommendation, which I said at the beginning, is that it would be good to send the documents online and to save the time spent on walks. I also use the registry office of the State Fund Agriculture, sending letters online. I send them directly and then they send me back an incoming number, so there are some signs of things happening. One thing I would like to say is that it is good for the people we communicate with or write to us to introduce themselves – to have names and positions so that I know who we are communicating with and who is behind what is requested. I think it should be so. I have seen these as problems. I am talking about subsequent communication about a payment application or approval with the regional departments. Beside that, when submitting the documents at the beginning, the work is perfect and I have no objections.

M: Okay, thank you! In your opinion, do the schemes contribute to an increase in the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products among children or not?

R: I have a son who is that age and is participating in the program at the school he attends and I see him starting to look for these products that I know he is getting there. From there I can make some kind of picture. At the very beginning, when we started the program, we had feedback from the directors that many of the products were being thrown in the bins or kids were throwing them at each other. This has changed over the years and now I can say that a large part of the target group of these programs consumes the products and seeks and expects them, which is the most important thing.

M: Great! The representatives of educational establishments, what do you think? Do schemes contribute to such a change or not?

R: In our kindergarten, children love to eat fruits. Even if there was someone who frowned at the beginning in the first group, by constantly having fruits every day, the children finally start eating. It is a success that there are more fruits in the kindergarten.



We also work on a bioprogram and have a biogarden. At the moment, we are already picking the tomatoes, so they can also see live how the vegetables grow.

M: Great! Other opinions and impressions of the effects of the schemes?

R: Our children, as I said, are disabled and have different diets, but the fact that fruits are offered definitely stimulates the consumption of more healthy products, because we all know that children are prone to junk food. Parents of children with disabilities monitor what the children eat because most have gastrointestinal problems, especially those with autism. There are already children with SEN in other educational establishments – kindergartens and mass schools, but we have a lot of children with problems, but so far I have not noticed any disorders after consuming the fruits. They definitely like them. I teach art and we drew on the subject. There was a contest we participated in, and that is how consumption is stimulated, because otherwise things go to junk food.

M: Yes. In your opinion, do the schemes meet the needs of disadvantaged or vulnerable children? You say only fruits are applicable.

R: Some are on more special diets. We have a lot of autistic children and they are very sensitive. I had to try a yogurt once because there were more and the women handing it out treated me, but I did not like it. It was very bitter and I have informed that something is happening with this yogurt. Apart from that, regarding the fruits, oranges and tangerines spoil a lot, and probably that is why there are more apples and pears, which are more durable. In general, they meet the needs, but there is much to be desired.

M: What is it that can be desired regarding your center in particular?

R: Just that the products are of good quality. What is valid for the other children is also valid for us and it should not cause any stomach discomfort, because we have many children with gastrointestinal problems.

M: Okay, thank you! The rest, what do you think? What more could be done to increase the consumption of fruits, vegetables, milk and dairy products among children within the schemes?

R: We have also stimulated this increase in products by the children by organizing drawing competitions from which we have made calendars. Apart from that, we are trying to send different entertaining games to educational establishments every month, with the aim of being able to arouse interest in children. It shall be worked in this direction. What the lady said about the organic garden is wonderful and I think that it should be worked in that direction.

I heard a while ago that the colleague was not satisfied with the products. I would advise her that there is a lot of competition of traders and producers on the market, and the quality of the products provided can really be improved a lot.

M: Okay, thank you! The rest, what else can be done within the schemes to increase consumption and build more sustainable healthy eating habits among children?

R: I think that family also plays a huge role. If at home this child does not have the habit of consuming milk, because I have heard from colleagues that milk is poured into flowers. In the last year, I find out that the teachers insist that the children take home the dairy products. Milk



products are also harder for children to open. Yellow cheese and cheese are vacuum packed and in most cases are brought home.

It is not only the role of the school or the kindergarten. Yes, this is where the start is made, but at home, if this child is not used to eating yogurt or drinking milk, it will be difficult for him to drink his milk at school.

M: Okay. The rest, do you have anything to add about any additional things that can be done within the schemes?

R: More advertising. We get 2 posters, but maybe more flyers, more advertising to parents. Thematic calendars advertising the School Fruit and School Milk scheme can be made .

M: And which are the products you think should be distributed through school schemes? Are these enough or are there some you would add as well as some you would remove?

R: In the kindergarten they are enough, because we have a menu there that goes in parallel, with other milk and desserts, so this scheme is enough with these fruits and milk. We have other things that are being added.

M: Okay, thank you!

R: I think that the products are absolutely sufficient and there is a variety. I come back to the fact that the percentage of agricultural production in the supply should not be increased, because this will immediately reduce the diversity. We have no way to make a variety, given that only apples are available on the market. This cannot happen.

I have some personal concerns that it is counted too much on milk. In my opinion, the emphasis should be on yogurt for obvious reasons. We are a country where yogurt should be on a pedestal, not the other way around.

Apart from that, I have no other remarks. I say again that there are enough good and quality products on the market that we, as suppliers, can choose and provide to educational establishments.

M: Okay, thank you! The rest of you, what do you think of the products?

R: As for milk, there is a ratio in the Ordinance of how much milk, how much yellow cheese and cheese. I do not agree here! Children prefer yellow cheese and cheese over milk, but we are obliged to give yellow cheese or cheese 1:1, i.e. it is necessary to provide 2 times milk so we can provide yellow cheese once and cheese once. I do not approve that.

Also, in addition to fruits, vegetables and milk, we also give honey, which we have not mentioned so far, but it is very good, as a suggestion and as implementation. Children eat honey with pleasure.

M: Okay, thank you! The rest of you, do you have anything to add?

Do you think the target groups of the scheme are suitable? In your opinion, children of what age should be covered by these schemes?

R: In my opinion, the target group should be increased and should include children from preparatory group to 7th grade. This is so that more and more children can be covered by this



program. Of course, I have no idea if there is funding for this or not, but I think it is important that more kids have access to these products. I skipped the kindergartens, where they are also from first to preparatory group. It would be good to increase the target group.

M: Okay. The rest of you, do you have any opinion on the matter?

R: I support this opinion because from 1st to 4th grade the children are covered, but it happens that others see the little ones are eating fruit or something and it is not a pleasant experience. We have a lot of hungry children – socially disadvantaged and even more disabled, and it is not good. Our children are up to the 12th grade, but it would be nice if the children up to 7th grade were included.

M: Okay, thank you! Any other opinions on the matter? In other groups, kindergarten representatives mentioned that nursery groups should also be covered. What do you think?

R: In our kindergarten we do not have nursery groups, but in principle it is possible, although not everyone could, since the little ones have a hard time eating apples and pears.

M: Okay. Those were my questions. If you want to share any problem, any impression or any suggestion, I would be glad to hear it?

R: I would like to comment on the topic with the target group. At the moment, when signing declarations from the educational establishments, an exemplary target group is determined, which becomes final before the start of deliveries. We clarify this target group by written email to each educational establishment and they return to us the current numbers before the delivery dates. We had a case this year with a discrepancy in information requested by the Ministry of Education and Science if I am not mistaken. The State Fund Agriculture had requested from the MES the target group for several educational establishments, and there was a discrepancy between what was provided to us as information by the educational establishment and what MES provided as information. In this case, we were penalized for delivering more products and the target group was smaller. I do not know if you understood me, but I was trying to explain it...

M: Yes, yes.

R: For me it would be good, before the year begins, that the principal somehow declares the number in question, because we cannot be held responsible for what is declared by the principal as a number.

The other thing I already said is that things will improve a lot if online application is introduced. That's it.

M: Okay. The rest of you, do you want to add something we have not discussed?

R: I agree with the colleague regarding the number we serve in kindergartens and schools. At the beginning of the school year, one number is presented, but we have schools in the region where the turnover rate is huge. Our number changes 3-4 times in one month, and then when inspected by the State Fund Agriculture in the given school, it turns out that we have a discrepancy. Perhaps, somehow, the principals should take responsibility and inform us about the number change. Whether it will be with a declaration or something else... In general, we keep in touch with the principals, but sometimes not all of them submit information about a change in



number. We have given less, we have given more, but during the inspection itself, the numbers that are in excess are not accepted, and we are penalized for the less numbers. We attribute everything to the fact that we are not informed about the number of children.

Thank you for the invitation! It was a pleasure for me to participate, and at the same time it was useful to hear from colleagues and understand their opinion!

M: I am glad! And I thank you too! The rest, do you want to add anything?

R: I thought of something I missed and would like to share. I return again to the issue of annual schedules. The annual schedules in question, which we submit to the Fund, and then, when determining the vacations, we submit new schedules, but when the dates of these schedules change, we need to collect such schedules from everyone again, to resubmit them to the State Fund Agriculture so that the schedule changes in question can then be indicated. In previous years, when there was a change in the schedule, it was enough to note in the handing over protocol between us and the educational establishment that a particular date was replaced by another in connection with the fact that the educational establishment was closed or that something happened. That was enough. Now, for each change, we need to re-collect schedules and submit them. I will give you an example of the last year, when educational establishments were constantly being closed and opened. We work with more educational establishments that are located in smaller municipalities and villages, and this is a bureaucracy that is unnecessary. It can be worked on that. In recent years, we have had too much of all that closing and opening due to the pandemic. Something drastic really needs to be done with these schedules to make the work easier. When there is an extreme situation, to be somehow easier to notify the Fund, so that it is not necessary to collect signatures from all educational establishments and submit them again. We submit and next week new changes appear and it starts all over again. This has really complicated our work in recent years.

I thank you too for the invitation! The meeting was very helpful and I welcome such things. I hope they will continue in the future!

M: Let's hope so! I thank you very much also for the useful advices!

R: I want to thank you too! It was very helpful, although kindergartens are a different type of organization, we are grateful for the School Fruit and School Milk schemes. They help us and let's keep working like this!

R: I thank you too! Our organization is also different – through “Children’s and school meals” we receive, but everything that is done for the children, I think is useful. We will achieve better results in time. I am sure of that!

R: I also want to thank and wish for improvement of the program! In general, I am satisfied, despite the critical remarks.

M: It is important to have critical remarks. Thank you very much for your time! I wish you a pleasant afternoon and success in everything!



7.4 APPENDIX NO. 4 COMPLETE RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

Appendix No. 4 Results of the quantitative survey among children and parents May-July 2022.

q7. How would you rate the financial situation of your household?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Much better than that of other households	2.8%	2.7%	2.8%
Rather better than other households	15.9%	16.9%	15.1%
Like the one of other households	57.3%	58.7%	56.1%
Worse than that of other households	3.9%	3.1%	4.6%
Much worse than that of other households	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%
I don't want to answer	19.2%	18.0%	20.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q8. Would you say that your child/children eat healthily?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Definitely yes	11.2%	11.7%	10.8%
Closer to yes	58.1%	62.2%	54.7%
Rather not	19.6%	15.9%	22.7%
Definitely no	1.2%	0.9%	1.5%
I can not decide	10.0%	9.4%	10.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q9.1. How often does your child consume_at home

	All	Kindergarten	School	
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574	
Fruits and vegetables	Every day several times a day	36.3%	42.2%	31.4%
	Once a day	43.2%	41.2%	44.9%
	At least once a week, but not every day	14.6%	11.8%	16.9%
	Less often	5.2%	4.2%	6.1%
	Does not consume at all	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk and yogurt	Every day several times a day	20.0%	22.8%	17.6%
	Once a day	45.2%	45.7%	44.8%
	At least once a week, but not every day	26.4%	23.8%	28.5%
	Less often	7.3%	6.4%	8.0%
	Does not consume at all	1.2%	1.3%	1.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Dairy products cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	Every day several times a day	18.8%	19.1%	18.7%
	Once a day	45.0%	45.6%	44.4%
	At least once a week, but not every day	26.0%	25.8%	26.1%
	Less often	8.9%	8.3%	9.4%
	Does not consume at all	1.4%	1.2%	1.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Chips, snacks, chocolate , waffles	Every day several times a day	8.4%	7.5%	9.1%
	Once a day	32.4%	31.5%	33.2%
	At least once a week, but not every day	30.7%	30.8%	30.7%
	Less often	25.7%	26.7%	24.9%
	Does not consume at all	2.8%	3.5%	2.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Carbonat ed and non- carbonate d soft drinks sugar-free	Every day several times a day	3.0%	2.1%	3.8%
	Once a day	9.9%	7.8%	11.6%
	At least once a week, but not every day	13.3%	10.7%	15.4%
	Less often	30.4%	25.0%	34.9%
	Does not consume at all	43.4%	54.3%	34.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Carbonat ed and non- carbonate d soft drinks with	Every day several times a day	3.5%	2.4%	4.5%
	Once a day	10.5%	8.0%	12.7%
	At least once a week, but not every day	13.5%	10.8%	15.9%
	Less often	30.7%	25.6%	34.9%
	Does not consume at all	41.8%	53.3%	32.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q9.2. How often does your child consume_at school/in the kindergarten

		All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>		23158	10545	12574
Fruits and vegetable s	Every day several times a day	22.8%	40.4%	8.0%
	Once a day	48.4%	50.6%	46.5%
	At least once a week, but not every day	19.9%	4.9%	32.4%
	Less often	5.6%	2.0%	8.6%
	Does not consume at all	3.4%	2.1%	4.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk and yogurt	Every day several times a day	10.3%	18.8%	3.3%
	Once a day	41.1%	57.1%	27.8%
	At least once a week, but not every day	34.4%	18.8%	47.4%
	Less often	8.9%	2.7%	14.1%
	Does not consume at all	5.3%	2.7%	7.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Dairy products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	Every day several times a day	7.8%	12.8%	3.6%
	Once a day	39.0%	54.6%	25.9%
	At least once a week, but not every day	36.0%	24.9%	45.2%
	Less often	11.6%	4.6%	17.5%
	Does not consume at all	5.7%	3.1%	7.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Chips, snacks, chocolate, waffles	Every day several times a day	2.8%	1.7%	3.9%
	Once a day	14.4%	7.1%	20.6%
	At least once a week, but not every day	13.4%	5.9%	19.7%
	Less often	22.1%	13.2%	29.5%
	Does not consume at all	47.2%	72.2%	26.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Carbonated and non-carbonated soft drinks sugar-free	Every day several times a day	1.3%	0.7%	1.8%
	Once a day	5.7%	3.1%	7.8%
	At least once a week, but not every day	7.1%	3.4%	10.1%
	Less often	18.5%	10.2%	25.5%
	Does not consume at all	67.4%	82.5%	54.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Carbonated and non-carbonated soft drinks with	Every day several times a day	1.5%	0.7%	2.2%
	Once a day	6.2%	2.7%	9.2%
	At least once a week, but not every day	7.0%	2.8%	10.6%
	Less often	18.2%	9.8%	25.3%
	Does not consume at all	67.0%	84.0%	52.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

q10.1 Approximately how much of the following products does your child consume on average per week at home:

**they consume the respective product at home at least once a week (c9.1)*

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables - at home - in grams	<i>n:</i>	21803	10045	11725
	Up to 300 g	23.4%	22.8%	24.0%
	From 301 to 800 g	20.4%	20.4%	20.2%
	From 801 to 1500 g	20.1%	20.5%	19.8%
	Over 1500 g	17.6%	16.8%	18.2%
	I can not decide	18.5%	19.4%	17.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	average	1056.3	1036.5	1072.9
Milk and yogurt - at home - in milliliters	<i>n:</i>	21206	9738	11435
	Up to 300 g	21.5%	21.6%	21.5%
	From 301 to 700 g	22.3%	22.5%	22.1%
	From 701 to 1200 g	20.4%	20.9%	20.0%
	Over 1200 g	20.8%	19.5%	21.9%
	I can not decide	15.0%	15.5%	14.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	average	1034.0	990.6	1070.9

Dairy products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese - at home -	<i>n:</i>	20790	9546	11214
	Up to 200 g	33.5%	34.2%	32.9%
	From 201 to 300 g	16.0%	16.2%	15.8%
	From 301 to 500 g	21.9%	20.8%	22.8%
	Over 500 g	13.0%	12.0%	13.7%
	I can not decide	15.7%	16.7%	14.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
average	380.9	369.4	390.2	

q10.2 Approximately how much of the following products does your child consume on average per week at school/in the kindergarten

**they consume the relevant product at the educational institution at least once a week (c9.2)*

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables - at school - in grams	<i>n:</i>	21071	10112	10925
	Up to 200 g	25.7%	21.9%	29.2%
	From 201 to 300 g	11.3%	9.6%	12.9%
	From 301 to 500 g	20.7%	19.6%	21.8%
	Over 500 g	12.5%	14.2%	10.9%
	I can not decide	29.8%	34.8%	25.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
average	402.7	432.9	378.1	
Milk and yogurt - at school - in milliliters	<i>n:</i>	19867	9977	9860
	Up to 200 g	24.6%	19.3%	29.9%
	From 201 to 300 g	10.7%	9.4%	11.9%
	From 301 to 500 g	19.5%	18.8%	20.2%
	Over 500 g	14.8%	17.8%	11.7%
	I can not decide	30.5%	34.7%	26.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
average	441.1	490.3	397.1	
Dairy products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese -	<i>n:</i>	19152	9731	9392
	Up to 100 gr.	25.6%	20.2%	31.2%
	From 101 to 200 g	22.4%	20.9%	23.9%
	From 201 to 300 g	21.0%	23.4%	18.5%
	I can not decide	31.1%	35.6%	26.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	average	183.1	195.2	172.1

q11. Approximately what percentage of your child's total daily nutrition are...

**consume the respective product at home or at the educational institution, no matter how often*

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables	<i>n:</i>	23074	10516	12520
	Up to 20%	30.4%	28.2%	32.1%
	From 21% to 30%	22.4%	23.2%	21.8%
	From 31% to 40%	12.1%	12.9%	11.5%
	Over 40%	11.3%	12.3%	10.5%
	I can not decide	23.8%	23.5%	24.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	average	28.4	29.3	27.7
Milk and yogurt	<i>n:</i>	23004	10481	12487
	Up to 15%	20.8%	20.4%	21.2%
	From 16% to 20%	19.2%	18.3%	19.9%
	From 21% to 30%	22.1%	23.6%	20.8%
	Over 30%	12.8%	13.2%	12.4%
	I can not decide	25.1%	24.4%	25.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	average	23.6	23.9	23.3
Dairy products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	<i>n:</i>	23012	10483	12492
	Up to 10%	22.4%	23.2%	21.7%
	From 11% to 20%	21.4%	21.8%	21.1%
	From 21% to 30%	20.0%	20.2%	19.9%
	Over 30%	10.0%	9.1%	10.7%
	I can not decide	26.2%	25.8%	26.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	average	21.7	21.2	22.1

q12. Does your child consume more or less of the following products now compared to a year ago?

**they consume the respective product at home and/or at the educational institution, no matter how often (q9.1 a)*

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables	<i>n:</i>	23074	10516	12520
	Much more	16.7%	20.5%	13.6%
	A little more	32.6%	34.9%	30.8%
	About as much as before	45.6%	40.9%	49.6%
	A little less	4.2%	3.2%	5.0%
	Much less	0.9%	0.6%	1.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk and yogurt	<i>n:</i>	23004	10481	12487
	Much more	13.6%	16.2%	11.5%
	A little more	29.7%	32.3%	27.6%
	About as much as before	49.2%	44.4%	53.1%
	A little less	6.2%	5.8%	6.5%
	Much less	1.3%	1.2%	1.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Dairy products - cheese, yellow cheese, cottage cheese	<i>n:</i>	23012	10483	12492
	Much more	11.8%	14.0%	9.9%
	A little more	28.3%	30.7%	26.3%
	About as much as before	51.9%	47.6%	55.4%
	A little less	6.3%	5.9%	6.7%
	Much less	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q13. At home or at school, your child consumes more

**they consume the respective product at home and/or at the educational institution, no matter how often (q9.1 a)*

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables	<i>n:</i>	23074	10516	12520
	At home	60.6%	46.0%	72.8%
	At school	19.2%	25.5%	13.9%
	About the same	20.2%	28.5%	13.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk and yogurt	<i>n:</i>	23004	10481	12487
	At home	61.5%	46.2%	74.4%
	At school	19.2%	26.5%	13.1%
	About the same	19.2%	27.2%	12.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk products	<i>n:</i>	23012	10483	12492
	At home	62.7%	47.1%	75.8%
	At school	16.3%	23.2%	10.5%
	About the same	21.0%	29.6%	13.7%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q14. Are you familiar with the School Fruit and School Milk programs?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Yes, in detail	21.2%	20.3%	22.0%
Yes, in part	49.3%	45.7%	52.2%
I have only heard of them	17.2%	19.0%	15.7%
I am not familiar	12.4%	15.0%	10.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q15. To what extent do you think the School Fruit and School Milk programs are beneficial for children?

giving an answer different from "Not familiar" to q14

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	20297	8959	11302
Extremely beneficial	66.6%	71.8%	62.5%
Beneficial to a certain extent	23.7%	19.1%	27.3%
They are not beneficial	1.2%	0.4%	1.9%
I can not decide	8.5%	8.7%	8.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q16. Which fruits/vegetables does the child recognize?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Apple	99.9%	99.9%	100.0%
Banana	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%
Cherries	98.6%	97.7%	99.5%
Orange	98.1%	96.9%	99.3%
Grapefruit	67.2%	49.7%	81.9%
Tangerine	95.4%	92.1%	98.2%
Peach	90.4%	84.0%	95.8%
Pear	99.1%	98.4%	99.6%
Plum	84.5%	73.2%	94.1%
Grapes	98.1%	96.8%	99.3%
Kiwi	91.0%	87.5%	94.1%
Cucumber	99.1%	98.9%	99.3%
Tomato	99.7%	99.7%	99.8%
Carrot	99.3%	99.2%	99.4%
Pepper	96.7%	95.4%	98.0%
Total	1417.0%	1369.5%	1457.8%

q17. Do you like to eat or drink?

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>		10545	12574
Fruits	Yes	96.5%	96.7%	96.4%
	No	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%
	I don't know	1.2%	1.0%	1.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Vegetables	Yes	88.6%	88.8%	88.4%
	No	8.6%	8.4%	8.8%
	I don't know	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	Yes	80.1%	79.9%	80.4%
	No	17.5%	17.8%	17.1%
	I don't know	2.4%	2.3%	2.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yogurt	Yes	89.0%	90.6%	87.7%
	No	9.1%	8.0%	10.0%
	I don't know	1.9%	1.4%	2.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cheese	Yes	83.4%	82.9%	83.9%
	No	13.2%	14.0%	12.5%
	I don't know	3.4%	3.1%	3.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yellow cheese	Yes	85.9%	86.1%	85.9%
	No	11.3%	11.2%	11.3%
	I don't know	2.8%	2.7%	2.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cottage cheese	Yes	21.0%	19.8%	21.9%
	No	62.7%	60.4%	64.7%
	I don't know	16.3%	19.8%	13.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

18. Why do you like to eat/drink?

giving a "Yes" answer for the relevant product in q17

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	22349	10193	12123
Fruits	Because they are delicious	64.9%	68.7%	61.6%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	55.7%	51.1%	59.7%
	Because my parents make me eat them	4.4%	4.1%	4.7%
	Because the other children like to eat them	1.3%	2.0%	0.7%
	For another reason			
	Total	126.3%	125.9%	126.7%

Vegetables	<i>n</i> :	20511	9361	11121
	Because they are delicious	53.2%	55.5%	51.3%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	62.8%	59.1%	66.0%
	Because my parents make me eat them	6.7%	6.9%	6.5%
	Because the other children like to eat them	1.2%	1.8%	0.7%
	For another reason			
Total	123.9%	123.3%	124.5%	
Milk	<i>n</i> :	18552	8422	10110
	Because they are delicious	67.5%	69.9%	65.5%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	41.9%	37.2%	45.9%
	Because my parents make me eat them	5.0%	5.3%	4.7%
	Because the other children like to eat them	1.7%	2.4%	1.1%
	For another reason	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Total	116.5%	115.2%	117.6%	
Yogurt	<i>n</i> :	20612	9557	11028
	Because they are delicious	68.8%	72.7%	65.4%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	40.4%	34.9%	45.1%
	Because my parents make me eat them	5.3%	5.3%	5.3%
	Because the other children like to eat them	1.5%	2.1%	1.0%
	For another reason	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Total	116.3%	115.3%	117.1%	
Cheese	<i>n</i> :	19325	8742	10552
	Because they are delicious	67.0%	70.2%	64.3%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	39.7%	34.3%	44.4%
	Because my parents make me eat them	7.5%	8.1%	6.9%
	Because the other children like to eat them	1.5%	2.3%	0.8%
	For another reason	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%
Total	116.0%	115.0%	116.8%	
Yellow cheese	<i>n</i> :	19901	9077	10797
	Because they are delicious	73.0%	76.2%	70.4%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	34.3%	29.3%	38.6%
	Because my parents make me eat them	5.8%	6.3%	5.5%
	Because the other children like to eat them	1.4%	2.0%	0.9%
	For another reason	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Total	114.9%	114.0%	115.7%	
Cottage cheese	<i>n</i> :	4857	2091	2759
	Because they are delicious	56.2%	58.7%	54.4%
	Because they are good for health and full of vitamins	45.3%	40.8%	48.8%
	Because my parents make me eat them	10.4%	12.1%	9.2%
	Because the other children like to eat them	2.1%	3.2%	1.2%
	For another reason	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Total	114.3%	115.1%	113.6%	

Why do you like to drink_Milk_other

	number of answers
Only with cocoa	35
Only with cereal/biscuits	37

Why do you like to eat_Yogurt_other

	number of answers
As a food supplement	18
Only in tarator	8
Only in ayran	25
Only with cereal/biscuits	23

Why do you like to drink_Cheese_other

	number of answers
As a food supplement	46
Only in banitsa / sandwich	14

Why do you like to drink_Yellow cheese_other

	number of answers
As a food supplement	15
Only in sandwich / pizza	41

Why do you like to drink_Cottage cheese_other

	number of answers
As a food supplement	3
Only in sandwich / banitsa	4

q19. Which of these fruits do you like to eat the most?

indicating that they know the respective fruit in q16

		All	Kindergarten	School
Apples	<i>n:</i>	23139	10533	12569
	Yes	94.4%	95.1%	93.9%
	No	4.4%	3.8%	4.9%
	I don't know	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Pears	<i>n:</i>	22941	10380	12525
	Yes	77.6%	79.0%	76.5%
	No	18.2%	16.9%	19.3%
	I don't know	4.2%	4.1%	4.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Peaches	<i>n</i> :	20925	8854	12043
	Yes	81.7%	78.7%	83.9%
	No	14.0%	15.8%	12.6%
	I don't know	4.4%	5.5%	3.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Plums	<i>n</i> :	19567	7722	11828
	Yes	60.9%	58.7%	62.3%
	No	31.7%	32.9%	30.9%
	I don't know	7.4%	8.4%	6.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cherries	<i>n</i> :	22841	10305	12505
	Yes	90.6%	88.9%	91.9%
	No	8.0%	9.3%	6.9%
	I don't know	1.5%	1.8%	1.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Grapes	<i>n</i> :	22727	10211	12486
	Yes	85.8%	86.4%	85.3%
	No	11.5%	11.0%	11.9%
	I don't know	2.7%	2.6%	2.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Bananas	<i>n</i> :	23131	10539	12554
	Yes	93.4%	94.4%	92.7%
	No	5.4%	4.8%	6.0%
	I don't know	1.2%	0.9%	1.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Tangerines	<i>n</i> :	22088	9715	12343
	Yes	88.0%	85.3%	90.1%
	No	9.9%	12.1%	8.1%
	I don't know	2.1%	2.6%	1.7%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Oranges	<i>n</i> :	22729	10218	12481
	Yes	80.3%	76.8%	83.2%
	No	16.7%	19.7%	14.2%
	I don't know	3.0%	3.5%	2.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Grapefruits	<i>n</i> :	15554	5244	10299
	Yes	28.4%	26.0%	29.5%
	No	64.0%	65.9%	63.0%
	I don't know	7.7%	8.1%	7.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Kiwi	<i>n</i> :	21076	9231	11826
	Yes	70.2%	68.5%	71.6%
	No	25.1%	26.7%	23.8%
	I don't know	4.7%	4.8%	4.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q20. Which of these vegetables do you like to eat the most?

indicating that they know the respective vegetable in q16

		All	Kindergarten	School
Tomatoes	<i>n:</i>	23098	10516	12543
	Yes	78.9%	76.0%	81.3%
	No	18.9%	21.9%	16.5%
	I don't know	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cucumbers	<i>n:</i>	22944	10429	12481
	Yes	95.9%	95.8%	96.0%
	No	3.5%	3.7%	3.4%
	I don't know	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Peppers	<i>n:</i>	22404	10056	12323
	Yes	38.6%	35.0%	41.4%
	No	55.3%	59.0%	52.3%
	I don't know	6.1%	5.9%	6.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Carrots	<i>n:</i>	22986	10459	12494
	Yes	77.6%	80.0%	75.6%
	No	18.5%	17.1%	19.7%
	I don't know	3.9%	2.9%	4.7%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q21.1. How many times a week do you usually eat/drink at home:

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
	Every day several times a day	42.1%	46.8%	38.1%
	Once a day	41.9%	40.2%	43.2%
	At least once a week, but not every day	12.0%	9.7%	14.0%
	Less often	3.5%	2.8%	4.1%
	I don't eat/drink	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	Every day several times a day	16.7%	17.9%	15.7%
	Once a day	37.7%	38.7%	36.9%
	At least once a week, but not every day	28.4%	26.3%	30.2%
	Less often	10.6%	10.0%	11.1%
	I don't eat/drink	6.6%	7.1%	6.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yogurt	Every day several times a day	18.6%	21.0%	16.6%
	Once a day	42.0%	44.6%	39.9%
	At least once a week, but not every day	28.4%	25.5%	30.8%
	Less often	8.3%	6.5%	9.8%
	I don't eat/drink	2.7%	2.4%	2.9%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Cheese	Every day several times a day	15.2%	15.0%	15.3%
	Once a day	40.3%	41.4%	39.5%
	At least once a week, but not every day	29.3%	29.9%	28.7%
	Less often	11.5%	10.0%	12.7%
	I don't eat/drink	3.8%	3.7%	3.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yellow cheese	Every day several times a day	13.9%	14.3%	13.6%
	Once a day	35.0%	35.0%	35.0%
	At least once a week, but not every day	33.5%	34.4%	32.8%
	Less often	13.3%	12.3%	14.1%
	I don't eat/drink	4.3%	4.0%	4.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q21.2. How many times a week do you usually eat/drink in the kindergarten/at school:

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Fruits and vegetables	Every day several times a day	25.4%	43.3%	10.4%
	Once a day	45.0%	48.1%	42.4%
	At least once a week, but not every day	21.0%	5.9%	33.6%
	Less often	5.8%	1.8%	9.1%
	I don't eat/drink	2.8%	0.8%	4.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	Every day several times a day	7.0%	11.0%	3.7%
	Once a day	30.2%	44.1%	18.6%
	At least once a week, but not every day	38.5%	33.1%	43.0%
	Less often	12.5%	5.6%	18.3%
	I don't eat/drink	11.7%	6.2%	16.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yogurt	Every day several times a day	8.1%	13.0%	4.1%
	Once a day	33.5%	48.1%	21.3%
	At least once a week, but not every day	40.1%	31.5%	47.2%
	Less often	10.7%	4.6%	15.9%
	I don't eat/drink	7.6%	2.8%	11.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Cheese	Every day several times a day	5.6%	8.1%	3.5%
	Once a day	27.3%	38.9%	17.6%
	At least once a week, but not every day	38.7%	38.7%	38.7%
	Less often	16.5%	9.3%	22.5%
	I don't eat/drink	11.9%	5.0%	17.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yellow cheese	Every day several times a day	5.3%	7.1%	3.8%
	Once a day	24.4%	32.7%	17.4%
	At least once a week, but not every day	42.2%	41.8%	42.5%
	Less often	18.4%	12.7%	23.2%
	I don't eat/drink	9.7%	5.7%	13.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

q22. Where do you eat/drink more often: at home or at school?

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Fruits and vegetables	At home	63.5%	48.2%	76.4%
	At school, in the kindergarten	24.5%	36.5%	14.4%
	Equally in both places	11.6%	14.9%	8.7%
	I don't know	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
	I don't eat/drink	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	At home	59.5%	45.1%	71.6%
	At school, in the kindergarten	25.9%	38.4%	15.4%
	Equally in both places	8.5%	10.6%	6.7%
	I don't know	1.6%	1.8%	1.5%
	I don't eat/drink	4.5%	4.0%	4.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yogurt	At home	62.7%	50.2%	73.2%
	At school, in the kindergarten	24.2%	34.2%	15.8%
	Equally in both places	10.0%	12.7%	7.7%
	I don't know	1.2%	1.4%	1.1%
	I don't eat/drink	1.9%	1.5%	2.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cheese	At home	65.9%	52.0%	77.5%
	At school, in the kindergarten	19.9%	30.1%	11.3%
	Equally in both places	9.6%	13.2%	6.6%
	I don't know	2.1%	2.5%	1.7%
	I don't eat/drink	2.6%	2.2%	2.9%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yellow cheese	At home	64.0%	52.9%	73.4%
	At school, in the kindergarten	20.6%	28.2%	14.1%
	Equally in both places	9.9%	12.7%	7.6%
	I don't know	2.5%	3.4%	1.8%
	I don't eat/drink	2.9%	2.7%	3.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q23. When you are at home, how do you prefer to eat your fruits and vegetables?

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
	Fresh	65.1%	67.4%	63.2%
	Cooked	7.8%	7.5%	7.9%
	As a juice	14.8%	15.5%	14.1%
	I love to eat them in every way	29.6%	26.6%	32.1%
	I don't eat fruits and vegetables at home	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%
	Total	117.8%	117.7%	117.9%

q24. Do you like to eat fresh, raw, uncooked fruits and vegetables?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
Yes	82.9%	84.2%	81.8%
Sort of	14.6%	13.3%	15.6%
No	2.6%	2.5%	2.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q25. Do you think that compared to last year now you eat/drink more:

**they consume the respective product at home and/or at the educational institution, no matter how often (q21.1 a)*

		All	Kindergarten	School
Fruits and vegetables	<i>n</i> :	23099	10526	12534
	Now I eat/drink more than last year	43.3%	47.1%	40.2%
	I eat/drink as much as last year	42.1%	35.9%	47.2%
	Now I eat/drink less than last year	2.5%	2.1%	2.8%
	I don't know	12.1%	14.8%	9.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	<i>n</i> :	22122	10119	11967
	Now I eat/drink more than last year	31.3%	34.0%	29.1%
	I eat/drink as much as last year	49.2%	44.0%	53.6%
	Now I eat/drink less than last year	5.8%	5.4%	6.2%
	I don't know	13.6%	16.6%	11.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yogurt	<i>n</i> :	22714	10389	12289
	Now I eat/drink more than last year	33.2%	36.0%	30.9%
	I eat/drink as much as last year	49.7%	44.6%	54.0%
	Now I eat/drink less than last year	5.1%	4.7%	5.4%
	I don't know	12.0%	14.7%	9.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Cheese	<i>n</i> :	22561	10310	12214
	Now I eat/drink more than last year	30.1%	32.2%	28.3%
	I eat/drink as much as last year	50.3%	45.7%	54.1%
	Now I eat/drink less than last year	5.8%	5.2%	6.2%
	I don't know	13.9%	16.9%	11.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Yellow cheese	<i>n</i> :	22478	10263	12181
	Now I eat/drink more than last year	30.3%	32.3%	28.6%
	I eat/drink as much as last year	49.8%	45.4%	53.4%
	Now I eat/drink less than last year	6.0%	5.4%	6.4%
	I don't know	14.0%	16.9%	11.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

q26. How often at school, in the kindergarten do they give you:

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Fruits and vegetables	Every day several times a day	22.1%	43.2%	4.5%
	Once a day	42.4%	48.4%	37.3%
	At least once a week, but not every day	29.2%	6.2%	48.4%
	Less than once a week	3.5%	0.6%	5.9%
	They don't give them to us at school/in the kindergarten	0.9%	0.4%	1.3%
	I don't know because I don't want to take them	2.0%	1.3%	2.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	Every day several times a day	5.3%	9.5%	1.7%
	Once a day	28.3%	43.8%	15.3%
	At least once a week, but not every day	48.1%	38.0%	56.6%
	Less than once a week	9.4%	2.9%	14.8%
	They don't give it to us at school/in the kindergarten	3.9%	1.6%	5.8%
	I don't know because I don't want to take them	5.0%	4.2%	5.7%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q27. How do you get the fruits, vegetables and milk you eat at school, in the kindergarten?

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
	They give them to us at school	89.9%	98.6%	82.5%
	I bring them from home	15.7%		28.9%
	I buy them from a store	2.0%		3.7%
	I don't eat fruits and vegetables at school, in the kindergarten	3.9%	1.4%	6.0%
	Total	111.5%	100.0%	121.1%

q28. Do you think that compared to last year, your school/kindergarten now gives you more fruits and vegetables?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Now they give us more fruits and vegetables than last year	19.8%	23.2%	16.9%
They give us as many fruits and vegetables as last year	45.7%	42.2%	48.7%
Now they give us less fruits and vegetables than last year	5.0%	1.5%	7.9%
I don't know	29.5%	33.1%	26.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q29. Do you think that compared to last year, your school/kindergarten now gives you more milk?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Now they give us more milk than last year	17.2%	19.0%	15.6%
They give us as much milk as last year	44.0%	41.0%	46.6%
Now they give us less milk than last year	4.9%	1.7%	7.6%
I don't know	33.9%	38.3%	30.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q30. What would you say about the fruits and vegetables that they give you at school, in the kindergarten?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
They are always fresh and juicy	66.3%	74.6%	59.4%
They are usually fresh, but sometimes we get them spoilt or rotten	18.4%	10.2%	25.4%
They are rarely fresh, more often we get them spoilt or rotten	2.6%	0.7%	4.2%
They are always spoiled or rotten	0.3%	0.1%	0.5%
I don't remember	12.3%	14.4%	10.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q31. And what would you say about the milk you get at school, in the kindergarten?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
It's always tasty	75.7%	81.1%	71.1%
It's usually tasty, but sometimes it's gone bad	6.1%	3.3%	8.6%
It is rarely tasty, more often we get it gone bad	1.5%	0.4%	2.4%
It is always gone bad	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%
I don't remember	16.5%	15.1%	17.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q35. Do you want to eat or drink more or less of the following products?

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Fruits	More	72.8%	69.7%	75.4%
	Less	2.4%	2.5%	2.3%
	As mush as up to now	21.6%	24.0%	19.7%
	I don't know	3.2%	3.8%	2.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Vegetables	More	54.5%	52.3%	56.3%
	Less	12.0%	11.2%	12.7%
	As mush as up to now	28.8%	31.3%	26.7%
	I don't know	4.7%	5.2%	4.3%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Milk	More	42.5%	40.2%	44.5%
	Less	16.7%	15.5%	17.7%
	As mush as up to now	32.1%	34.7%	29.9%
	I don't know	8.7%	9.5%	7.9%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yogurt	More	49.5%	49.1%	50.0%
	Less	10.7%	8.9%	12.3%
	As mush as up to now	33.7%	35.8%	32.0%
	I don't know	6.0%	6.2%	5.7%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cheese	More	42.4%	40.1%	44.4%
	Less	12.9%	11.8%	13.9%
	As mush as up to now	35.6%	39.1%	32.7%
	I don't know	9.1%	9.1%	9.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Yellow cheese	More	47.4%	44.3%	50.0%
	Less	10.1%	9.4%	10.7%
	As mush as up to now	33.7%	36.7%	31.3%
	I don't know	8.7%	9.6%	8.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Cottage cheese	More	11.1%	10.5%	11.6%
	Less	28.4%	26.4%	30.0%
	As mush as up to now	18.3%	19.6%	17.1%
	I don't know	42.2%	43.4%	41.2%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Chips, snacks, stick crackers	More	22.2%	23.6%	21.1%
	Less	28.4%	21.4%	34.2%
	As mush as up to now	25.8%	23.1%	28.0%
	I don't know	23.6%	31.9%	16.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Chocolate, chocolate biscuits and	More	27.1%	30.1%	24.5%
	Less	26.9%	20.2%	32.5%
	As mush as up to now	27.9%	25.1%	30.2%
	I don't know	18.1%	24.5%	12.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
French fries	More	33.1%	33.8%	32.4%
	Less	21.8%	16.7%	26.0%
	As mush as up to now	27.0%	25.2%	28.5%
	I don't know	18.1%	24.2%	13.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Sandwiches bought outside	More	15.2%	13.1%	17.1%
	Less	33.5%	27.6%	38.5%
	As much as up to now	22.9%	19.3%	25.9%
	I don't know	28.4%	40.1%	18.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Sandwiches made at home	More	35.7%	30.8%	39.7%
	Less	13.6%	11.4%	15.4%
	As much as up to now	33.7%	29.7%	37.1%
	I don't know	17.0%	28.0%	7.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Something else	More	11.6%	10.1%	13.0%
	Less			
	As much as up to now			
	I don't know	88.4%	89.9%	87.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q35. Which products do you want to eat or drink more of? - number of answers

	All	Kindergarten	School
Fresh, smoothie	809	321	486
Meat	469	166	303
Pizza / Spaghetti / Pasta / Doner kebab / Hotdog	448	170	278
Cooked meals	327	139	188
Desserts (creams, cake, baklava)	302	147	153
Pastry snacks (banitsa, pastry with yellow cheese, cheese, sausage)	287	64	223
Ice cream	271	119	152
Fish and seafood	214	110	104
Soups	193	110	83
Salami, sausages	158	67	91
Ayran	133	45	88
Water	127	49	78
Fruit milks	122	41	81
Bread, bagel	111	54	57
Fresh salads	100	25	75
Carbonated soft drinks	89	21	67
Nuts and seeds	84	20	64
Eggs	82	35	47
Cereal breakfast, muesli, cornflakes, couscous, sop	71	40	31
Wafers, pancakes, muffins, mekitsa, donuts	58	22	36
Tarator	54	24	30
Honey	44	15	29
Tea	61	39	22

q36. Which of the following things you have you done at school/in the kindergarten?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
We visit farms or gardens	5.7%	5.9%	5.5%
We make gardens and take care of them. They teach us how to grow fruits and vegetables	17.7%	24.6%	12.0%
They teach us how to cook fruits and vegetables	17.4%	17.9%	17.0%
They teach us how to protect nature and the environment	71.6%	63.3%	78.6%
They teach us how to eat healthy	71.8%	65.9%	76.6%
We have games, riddles, quizzes related to fruits and vegetables	51.9%	61.0%	44.3%
They showed us brochures, posters, DVDs about fruits and vegetables	26.9%	29.5%	24.7%
Other activities related to fruits and vegetables	31.2%	37.8%	25.8%
No answer	9.4%	12.2%	7.0%
Total	303.6%	318.0%	291.5%

q37. Is it interesting to you to visit farms or gardens to show you what care fruits and vegetables need?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Yes	59.2%	59.6%	58.9%
Sort of	15.2%	10.9%	18.7%
No	2.9%	2.3%	3.4%
I don't know	22.8%	27.2%	19.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q38. Is it interesting to you to learn and know how to grow your own fruits and vegetables?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Yes	75.0%	77.6%	73.0%
Sort of	15.3%	11.6%	18.4%
No	2.2%	1.7%	2.6%
I don't know	7.5%	9.1%	6.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q39. Do you see posters, signs, drawings, photos, videos or other images of fruits and vegetables?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Every day several times a day	31.9%	37.9%	26.9%
Once a day	23.3%	25.4%	21.4%
At least once a week, but not every day	25.4%	23.6%	26.8%
Less than once a week	12.7%	8.6%	16.1%
In my school, kindergarten, there are no posters, inscriptions, drawings	6.8%	4.5%	8.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q40. When you are at home, how often do you feel like eating fruits and vegetables, but there are none?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
Always	7.6%	7.2%	8.0%
Often	13.4%	12.1%	14.5%
Sometimes	46.9%	44.9%	48.5%
Never	32.1%	35.9%	29.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q41. What is cheese made from?

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
From milk	87.4%	81.9%	92.0%
From yogurt	3.9%	4.2%	3.7%
From something else	0.4%	0.6%	0.3%
I don't know what it's made from	8.2%	13.2%	4.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q42. Is it healthy or harmful in your opinion:

		All	Kindergarten	School
	<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
Sweet food	Healthy	9.9%	12.2%	8.0%
	Harmful	80.2%	74.1%	85.4%
	I don't know	9.9%	13.7%	6.6%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Salty food	Healthy	21.8%	23.8%	20.1%
	Harmful	57.5%	51.2%	62.8%
	I don't know	20.7%	25.1%	17.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Fat food	Healthy	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
	Harmful	83.6%	76.7%	89.3%
	I don't know	13.2%	20.1%	7.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Carbonated drinks	Healthy	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
	Harmful	90.5%	87.0%	93.6%
	I don't know	7.6%	11.1%	4.5%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q2. Gender - parent

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
Male	8.0%	7.1%	8.7%
Female	92.0%	92.9%	91.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q3. Age - parent

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
18-30	19.7%	27.4%	13.4%
31-35	30.5%	33.8%	27.8%
36-40	28.6%	24.9%	31.7%
41+	21.1%	13.9%	27.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q4. Education - parent

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
Higher	50.4%	55.9%	45.8%
Secondary	35.1%	33.8%	36.2%
Primary and lower	14.5%	10.3%	18.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q5. You are - a parent

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n</i> :	23158	10545	12574
A student	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
A (co-)owner/manager of a company	5.6%	5.4%	5.8%
Working in a managerial position	10.8%	10.8%	10.9%
Working in an executive position	54.7%	55.5%	54.1%
Unemployed	16.2%	14.0%	18.0%
Retired	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Housewife/on maternity leave	12.2%	13.9%	10.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q6. Ethnicity - parent

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Bulgarian	74.0%	79.3%	69.5%
Bulgarian Mohammedan / Turk	12.4%	9.9%	14.5%
Roma	11.7%	9.3%	13.8%
Other ethnicity	1.9%	1.6%	2.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q43. Gender - child

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Boy	49.7%	49.7%	49.7%
Girl	50.3%	50.3%	50.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q44. Years - child

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
3	5.1%	11.2%	
4	10.9%	23.9%	
5	14.5%	31.5%	0.2%
6	12.1%	25.3%	1.0%
7	10.9%	8.1%	13.3%
8	14.0%		25.7%
9	13.0%		23.9%
10	12.8%		23.5%
11	6.8%		12.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q45. Which grade are you in at school, which group are you in the kindergarten:

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
First group in the kindergarten	10.4%	22.8%	
Second group in the kindergarten	11.4%	25.1%	
Third group in the kindergarten	13.7%	30.1%	
Fourth group in the kindergarten	10.0%	22.0%	
First grade at school	12.5%		22.9%
Second grade at school	13.3%		24.5%
Third grade at school	13.9%		25.4%
Fourth grade at school	13.9%		25.6%
Third group at school	0.2%		0.4%
Fourth group at school	0.7%		1.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

q45. Which grade are you in at school, which group are you in the kindergarten:

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
First group	10.4%	22.8%	
Second group	11.4%	25.1%	
Third group	13.9%	30.1%	0.4%
Fourth group	10.7%	22.0%	1.2%
First grade	12.5%		22.9%
Second grade	13.3%		24.5%
Third grade	13.9%		25.4%
Fourth grade	13.9%		25.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Province

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
Blagoevgrad	5.1%	4.7%	5.4%
Burgas	5.9%	5.1%	6.6%
Varna	3.2%	4.1%	2.2%
Veliko Turnovo	3.3%	4.4%	2.4%
Vidin	1.0%	2.0%	0.2%
Vratsa	4.7%	6.1%	3.4%
Gabrovo	1.5%	2.0%	1.2%
Dobrich	1.4%	1.3%	1.5%
Kardjali	2.1%	1.2%	2.9%
Kyustendil	1.6%	1.8%	1.4%
Lovech	2.1%	1.6%	2.6%
Montana	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Pazatdzhik	4.0%	2.7%	5.1%
Pernik	2.1%	2.2%	2.0%
Pleven	3.3%	1.9%	4.3%
Plovdiv	10.8%	11.2%	10.5%
Razgrad	3.2%	2.3%	3.9%
Ruse	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%
Silistra	1.9%	1.1%	2.6%
Sliven	3.9%	4.8%	3.3%
Smolyan	1.7%	1.5%	1.9%
Sofia city	13.6%	16.2%	11.5%
Sofia province	4.1%	6.2%	2.5%
Stara Zagora	3.4%	1.9%	4.6%
Targovishte	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Haskovo	3.6%	2.6%	4.4%
Shumen	1.2%	0.6%	1.8%
Yambol	2.6%	2.2%	3.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Type of settlement

	All	Kindergarten	School
<i>n:</i>	23158	10545	12574
town	71.0%	65.0%	75.9%
village	29.0%	35.0%	24.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Type of educational institution

	All
<i>n:</i>	23158
Kindergarten	45.5%
School	54.3%
Center for Special Educational Support	0.2%
Total	100.0%